

advocated partnership between Greeks and Romans. An ancient catalogue of his works listed 227 items, of which 87 survive, most lumped together under the title *Moralia*, in addition to 50 biographies in *Parallel Lives of Famous Greeks and Romans*. His "On Moral Virtues" is Aristotelian and anti-Stoic: piety being a mean between superstition and atheism. In his dialogues, Plutarch, essentially a Platonist, discussed the fate of the soul after death. His antiquarian works are a mine of information about paganism, music, and education.

Plutarch's "Dialogue on Love" presents an imaginary debate (an example of *contest literature*), between a pederast and an advocate of the love of women. Declaring that "the one true love is the love of youths," the pederast, reciting a list of famous heterosexual lovers, attacks heterosexual love as self-indulgent, vulgar, and servile. The advocate of the love of women, equally cutting, condemns pederasty as unnatural and innovative in the bad sense. With passionate arguments on both sides, this example reveals that the days when the superiority of pederasty could be taken for granted had long passed.

In a vivacious sketch, Plutarch sets forth a conversation between Odysseus and one of his men who, through enchantment, has been turned into a pig (Gryllos). To the hero's surprise the pig who was once a man does not want to return to his human state: he prefers to remain a beast because, in his view, animals live a life in conformity with nature, while human beings do not. According to Gryllos, one evidence of the superiority of animals is the supposed fact that they do not practice male or female homosexuality. While this claim has been disproved, over the centuries Plutarch's little dialogue exercised a good deal of influence as a touchstone of the "happy beast" conceit (see *Animal Homosexuality*), which argued that human conduct could be reformed for the better by adopting the "natural, healthy" standards of animals.

In his vivid and gripping *Lives*, Plutarch stressed the vices and virtues in the personalities of the great as well as their family, education, personality, and changes of fortune. Their accuracy varies according to the sources available to him. Many portray pederasty flatteringly, particularly in the case of heroes of Sparta and Thebes, sometimes unflatteringly as in Otho and other Roman emperors, and amusingly as in the case of Demetrios Poliorcetes. They were extremely influential and much read from the Italian Renaissance through the Napoleonic era, when they were central to the Exemplar Theory of history—the concept that history teaches through the lives of great men who excelled either in virtue or vice. With the emergence of the idea of history as a supra-individual process, the accomplishment above all of the nineteenth-century German school, the centrality of Plutarch's biographies faded.

Plutarch shows that if pederasty was an ambivalent and disputed subject in late pagan antiquity, still no general taboo on the discussion or even more, the practice of it existed before the Christian church began to exert its influence on law and public opinion.

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William A. Percy

POETRY

Through most of history, poetry has been a vital form of literature, and one which has often lent itself to the expression of erotic or romantic sentiment. At the same time, poetry displays an inherent capacity for ambiguity which has provided a cover for homoerotic elements which might otherwise never have reached the printed page. In light of these considerations, and the long period during which the poetry of ancient Greece and Rome

(often pederastic) has been held up as a model and inspiration, it is not surprising to find an abundant homoerotic tradition expressed in poetic form.

Traditionally, poetry has been classified as epic, dramatic, and lyric. While some homosexual elements appear in early epics, most relevant poetry belongs to the lyric genre, which permits expression of individual feelings.

Antiquity and the Earlier Middle Ages. The history of homosexual poetry begins with the epic theme of the loving friendship between two warriors. In *Mesopotamia*, this theme was exemplified by the love between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, and in Greece between Achilles and Patroclus, depicted respectively in the anonymous *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and Homer's *Iliad*. David's "Lament for Jonathan" in the Old Testament (II Samuel 1:17-27) contains the famous phrase "surpassing the love of women," although it has never been explained whether this means that Jonathan's love for David surpassed a man's love for women, or woman's love for men.

The first lesbian poems were the ones that ultimately gave lesbianism its name, the intense lyrics of Sappho of Lesbos, a Greek island. Theognis of Megara introduced pederastic ideals into Greek poetry, establishing a long-lived tradition, and many of the leading poets of ancient Greece dealt with the love of boys. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Greek poets turned to this subject in large numbers. Theocritus excelled as an exponent of the pastoral conventions for such poetry. The twelfth book of the *Greek Anthology* is the *Mousa Paidike* ("boyish muse") edited by Strato of Sardis, a collection of over 250 brief pederastic poems expressing a remarkable range of sentiment.

Among the Romans, most of the leading poets dealt with homosexuality at some point. Vergil wrote a pastoral poem about Corydon, which gave André Gide the title for his modern defense of ped-

erasty. The sardonic Martial composed many poems on this subject. Catullus wrote several which were so explicit that only recently have they been honestly translated into English.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, there were a few poets who treated this theme and whose works have survived, including Luxorius in Vandal North Africa and the Greek Nonnus in Egypt; the latter's *Dionysiaka* counts as the only surviving "Byzantine" poem to deal extensively with homosexuality. The later Byzantines reputedly burned the poetry of Sappho, but preserved the *Mousa Paidike*.

The central Middle Ages (eleventh and twelfth centuries) saw the appearance of a number of medieval Latin poets, mainly clergy in France, who wrote homosexual works, including Abelard, Baudri of Bourgueil, Hilary (an Englishman), Marbod of Rennes, and Walter of Châtillon. The "Debate Between Helen and Ganymede," an imitation of the ancient contest literature, concerns the relative merits of women and boys. The early Portuguese-Galician *cantigos de amigo* were poems written by men in which a female persona describes her love for a man; some of these poems must have been written by homosexuals.

Non-Western Poetry. It was not long after Islam spread across much of the world that pederastic poems began to appear, especially in Iran (Persia) and Andalusia. The Persian poets were generally Sufis, mystics whose love for youths was disguised as an allegorical love for God; these included such famous poets as Hafiz, Rumi, and Sa'di. One of their favorite themes was the love of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna for the boy Ayaz. Omar Khayyam mentions this topic in his *Rubaiyat* ["where name of Slave and Sultan is forgot, and peace to Mahmud on his golden throne"]. The Andalusian poets of Granada who extolled pederasty were too numerous to mention, but it must be noted that the Jewish poets of Spain also wrote such poetry, including the most famous of

them, Jehuda Halevi (*see Judaism, Sephardic*). The **Turks** also cultivated pederastic poetry, drawing upon the earlier rich Islamic tradition. In **India**, Hindu poets avoided it, but Islamic poets, including Babur, founder of the Mughal dynasty, addressed it.

Outside Arab North Africa, only two "African" poets are known to have been homosexual, Roy Campbell of modern South Africa, and Rabearivalo of the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, the latter writing in French. There is little record of homosexual poetry in Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands.

Although pederasty was widespread in Japan, and often expressed in short stories and other works of fiction, the only Japanese poet noted for dealing with it is the modern Matsuo Takahashi.

China is a different matter. Arthur Waley once observed that there were an enormous number of Chinese poems dealing with male friendships instead of heterosexual love. Unfortunately, very few of them have been translated into English. One pederastic poet has been the subject of a biography by Waley, Yüan Mei (eighteenth century). Some homosexual items appear in *New Songs From a Jade Terrace*, a anthology of Chinese love poems compiled in ancient times. This has been translated into English, and is the best introduction to Chinese homosexual poetry available. As a large portion of all homosexual verse is probably Chinese, it is to be regretted that so little of this heritage is accessible to Westerners.

Europe in the Later Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The later Middle Ages were a dry period for homosexual poetry. There are sections of **Dante's Divine Comedy** and brief passages in **Chaucer's Canterbury Tales** which bear on homosexuality; there were brief mentions of homosexuals in some of the eddas and sagas of Scandinavia. Some of the friendships between warriors in medieval narrative poems seem to have homosexual

overtones. These, however, are merely bits and scraps to be found over a long period of time.

With the coming of the **Renaissance** and its rediscovery of the classic poetic tradition, homosexual poetry began to flourish anew. Antonio Beccadelli wrote elegant scurrilities in Latin about sodomites. **Poliziano** described the homosexuality of **Orpheus** in *La Favola di Orfeo*. The sculptor **Michelangelo** expressed his passion for handsome young men in sonnets and other forms. The homosexual poetry of Italy during this period is vast in quantity, and much of it, including work in the **Bernesque** and **Burchiellesque** genres, has never been translated into English.

In England, Richard **Barnfield** composed openly pederastic poems, but stopped when he was condemned for this ("If it be sin to love a lovely lad, oh then sin I"). **Shakespeare** wrote his famous sonnets to a youth mysteriously known as "Mr. W. H." **Christopher Marlowe** and **Michael Drayton** both dealt with **Edward II**. In France during this period, there were some poets who wrote about homosexuality, especially **Denis de Saint-Pavin**, the "king of Sodom."

Most of the seventeenth century showed a dearth of homosexual poetry. There were poems about beautiful boys written by **Giambattista Marino** in Italy and by **Don Juan de Arguijo** in Spain, but it is a long haul until the Restoration in England, when **John Wilmot (Lord Rochester)** wrote about pederasty, only to be followed by an even longer silence.

Modern Times. From the Romantic period, the number of poets increases until the present day, so that it becomes more and more difficult to evaluate the extant material. Numerous poets must remain unmentioned in order to concentrate on some of the more important or interesting figures.

Russia discloses only one poem by **Pushkin**, but it does boast **Vyacheslav Ivanov**, **Mikhail Kuzmin**, and the modern poetry of **Gennady Trifonov**. The Nether-

lands and the Scandinavian countries produced a few minor poets, especially Vilhelm Ekelund of Sweden. Spain and Latin America gave us Federico García Lorca, Porfirio Barba-Jacob, and Luis Cernuda. Portugal rejoices in the lyrical António Botto and Fernando Pessoa, who ranks as one of the greatest modernist poets in any language. Italy claims Pier Paolo Pasolini, Mario Stefani, and Sandro Penna, all pederastic. Alexandria, Egypt, hosted Constantine Cavafy, a Greek and arguably the finest openly homosexual poet of the twentieth century. Canada produced E. A. Lacey, Ian Young, and some other poets. There are also homosexual poems written in little-known languages such as Basque, Lithuanian, and Friulian.

Britain. Though most of the British homosexual poetry has come from England, it was a Scot, Lord Alfred Douglas, who created one of the most famous poems on this theme, the one which calls it "the Love that dare not speak its name." George Gordon, Lord Byron wrote a number of covert love poems to his boyfriends, and to him was (falsely) attributed the authorship of *Don Leon* (ca. 1836), a verse defense of pederasty which is a masterpiece of its kind. The true author may have been Thomas Love Peacock, but this cannot be proven. Shelley was also interested in homosexuality, as is seen in his translations of Plato. Alfred Lord Tennyson created the great *In Memoriam* after the death of his beloved Hallam, and Queen Victoria loved it in spite of the condemnation that came from homophobic critics ("It is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all."). Thomas Lovell Beddoes wrote one of the most beautiful of homosexual love-poems, also on the theme of the lost lover, "Dream-pedlary."

The latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century saw a tremendous amount of homosexual (mostly pederastic) poetry produced in England. The full details of this golden age appear in Brian Reade's *Sexual Heretics* (London, 1970) and in Timothy d'Arch

Smith's *Love in Earnest* (London, 1970), but some overview of this material must be given here. The British public school system, along with the sexual segregation at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, stimulated a vast outpouring of love poems aimed at (mostly) boys. A few of these compositions, such as those by John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter, concerned working-class men in their twenties. The pederastic poets included John Gamilton Nicholson, Edward Cracroft Lefroy, Frederick Rolfe ("Baron Corvo"), Aleister Crowley, Edwin Bradford, Edmund John, and many others. A place apart among these writers is reserved for Ralph N. Chubb, who created extraordinary privately-printed books illustrated by himself.

This flourishing was somewhat interrupted by the uproar over the "decadents," especially Oscar Wilde, at the end of the nineteenth century. This uproar started with Theodore Wratislaw's poem "To a Sicilian Boy" and Douglas' poem (noted above) and culminated with Wilde's going to prison. However, this poetic movement continued after things had calmed down, producing such lyric masterpieces as Edmund John's "The Seven Gifts" and Richard Middleton's "The Bathing Boy." James Elroy Flecker translated a Turkish poem, "The Hammam Name" (*name*, Turkish for "piece of writing"), into English.

This traditional poetry gradually gave way to modernist poetry, among the practitioners of which may be counted such homosexuals as Wystan Hugh Auden, Thom Gunn, and others. Auden moved to America and fell in love with young Chester Kallman. James Kirkup wrote a poem about a Roman soldier who was sexually attracted to the naked, dying Christ, and when this was published in London's *Gay News* in 1976, the British government prosecuted the publisher for violating the law against blasphemy. However, the pornography laws were meanwhile liberalized to the point where

explicit poems could be published, such as Auden's pornographic "Platonic Blow."

The United States. There were some American romantic poems written before the Civil War on homoerotic themes, such as Henry David Thoreau's "The Gentle Boy," which were protected from public outrage by the pre-Freudian belief that it was possible for two men or two women to love each other in a non-sexual manner.

Outrage did greet the publication of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in 1860 with a homosexual section, "Calamus." Whitman defended himself by claiming he was heterosexual, but the poems speak for themselves; a group of English minor poets called themselves "Calamites" in his honor. Whitman had a tremendous influence on American poetry in general and on homosexual literature in particular, and he is often mistakenly considered the only American homosexual poet of the nineteenth century, but there were a host of minor, now largely forgotten, versifiers (see Stephen W. Foster, "Beauty's Purple Flame"). Many of these poets, such as the unlucky James Bense, tended to deal with the Tennysonian theme of the lover who has died.

The most important of these writers was the pederastic George Edward Woodberry. Another interesting poet was the highly precocious Cuthbert Wright, whose volume of homosexual verse, *One Way of Love* (1915), completed when he was only sixteen years old, was published both in America and England. George Sylvester Viereck also wrote "decadent" poems.

After World War I, the chief modernist poet in America was the homosexual Hart Crane, who preferred sailors and young Mexican boys. The painter Marsden Hartley also produced poetry.

Lesbian Poetry in English. After classical antiquity, little lesbian poetry worth noting was written until the end of the nineteenth century in Europe and

America, and no lesbian poetry at all is known from Africa, Asia, or Latin America. There was a brief flourishing of lesbian verse among educated women in England during the seventeenth century ("The Matchless Orinda" and some others), but it is not until Emily Dickinson that the theme reappeared. In England, there had been "lesbian" poems written by Swinburne (from the male point of view) and Christina Rossetti ("Goblin Market"), but the apogee of lesbian poetry was reached by the international (part Hawaiian, among other strains) poet Pauline Tarn, who wrote in French under the pen-name of Renée Vivien, and who had a love affair with Natalie Clifford Barney in Paris.

An attentive reading of the lyrics of Edna St. Vincent Millay, who was bisexual, shows them to treat tender feelings for young women. Some other American lesbian poets who should be mentioned are Amy Lowell, the imagist and literary impresario, and Katherine Lee Bates, a professor at Wellesley College. Bates produced *Yellow Clover*, a sort of lesbian version of *In Memoriam*, and she also wrote "America the Beautiful," which almost became the American national anthem.

Germany. Count August von Platen was a homosexual poet who was the victim of a homophobic attack by Heinrich Heine. Xavier Mayne wrote a long study of Platen and Platen's sonnets have been translated into English. There appears to have been a tremendous upsurge of homosexual poetry in Germany at the same time as in England, but very few of these poets have been rendered into English, and in any case most of them were minor. In the midst of a vast amount of inferior homosexual poetry, there appeared a giant, Stefan George, whose *Seventh Ring* was written in honor of his boyfriend, Maximilian Kronberger, a teenager known poetically as Maximin—a quasi-divine figure who died young. There has not been another German homosexual poet of simi-

lar stature since George, but there has been no dearth of poets, except during the Nazi period.

France. Charles Baudelaire (along with Swinburne) introduced intimations of lesbianism into poetry written by men, and founded the "decadent" school of literature, which caused French and English poets to explore sexual themes hitherto taboo, including homosexuality. Some of these writers seem to have been heterosexuals experimenting with "horrifying" themes, and it must be noted that some of the poets who wrote about homosexuality also wrote about necrophilia, for example. Their aim was to create shudders, not to express their personal feelings. Isidore Ducasse, called *Lautréamont*, created the phantasmagoric *Les chants de Maldoror* before dying young; this has some pederastic scenes.

Arthur Rimbaud stopped writing at the age of twenty, after having had a tempestuous love affair with Paul Verlaine, both were major poets. Some of their poems deal with homosexuality, especially in the volume *Hombres/femmes*. Pierre Louÿs devised *Les chansons de Bilitis*, a volume of lesbian poems supposedly translated from the Greek. This book provided American lesbians with the name of their first organization, the Daughters of Bilitis. A host of other French poets at this time ("fin de siècle," end of the nineteenth century) wrote decadent or pseudo-decadent poems and even song lyrics (Aristide Bruant's songs about boy prostitutes, sung in the Moulin Rouge). Much of the French homosexual poetry of the twentieth century has been produced by writers more famous for other things, such as novels (Crevel, Cocteau, and Genet). Contemporary French poetry in general lacks great names, and this is also true of homosexual poetry.

Postwar American Poetry. After World War II, some new homosexual poetic voices were heard in America, such as Paul Goodman, Jack Spicer, and Allen Ginsberg, with the latter attaining world-

wide fame in the context of the **beat generation**. Honesty increased as more and more poets "came out" at the same time that **pornography** laws were being struck down by the courts. There are now numerous homosexual poets in North America, such as Edward Field, Richard Howard, Dennis Kelly, James Merrill, and James Schuyler. Of the lesbian poets associated with the second wave of feminism possibly the most important is Adrienne Rich, author of the volumes *Of Woman Born* (1976) and *The Dream of a Common Language* (1978). Rich has also been influential as a critic. Catherine R. Stimpson has characterized Rich's major themes as "the analysis of male power over women; the rejection of that power; the deconstruction of dominant images of women; the need for women to construct their own experience, history, and identity; and the tension between two possible futures"—androgynous and separatist. Other lesbian poets have written from the black, Chicana, and American Indian experiences. The cultures from which these poets stem retain a loyalty to poetry that has been eroded elsewhere.

The Present Situation. This flourishing of gay literature has taken place at a time when poetry as such has moved out of the cultural mainstream. Most of the public no longer reads poetry at all, its function being usurped in part by popular music lyrics, and as a result the writing of poetry is not financially viable. In a sense, poetry has "gone underground," claimed by cultural minorities for whom commercial success is not an expected result. In a crude form, it continues to demonstrate vitality, if not much originality, among the uneducated, as seen in the emergence of "rap" rhyming, metrical verse from the inner city. But there is little incentive for highly talented writers to write poetry.

The rise of the gay liberation movement stimulated the appearance of numerous small-circulation publications aimed at an exclusively homosexual or lesbian audience, and these provide gay

poets with an outlet for their work, since what remains of "mainstream" poetry periodicals show little interest in publishing homosexual material. The problem is that most of this material is published because of its theme rather than its literary merit. Furthermore, it has fostered a ghettoization of gay literature: homosexual writings aimed at an exclusively homosexual audience.

Heterosexual Americans do not buy or read homosexual poetry, with the exception of classics from the past like Whitman. One would think that if homosexuals can appreciate heterosexual love stories, heterosexuals could relate to homosexual love stories (or poetry), especially since thousands of heterosexuals never noticed that A. E. Housman was writing about boy and boy, not boy and girl. But modern homosexual poetry is no longer about love as a human universal, expressed in homosexual terms; it is specifically about homosexuality as such.

Conclusion. For better or worse, this is a prosaic, not a poetic age. Much of the current spate of gay male poetry may be attributed to the retrospective, nostalgic side of homosexual taste, as seen in the predilection for antique furniture and grand opera. Formally, however, much of the current gay male poetry reflects a shallow modernism of omission—it lacks rhyme, meter, significant imagery. In his exaltation of everyday experience, the pioneer of this kind of work was the New York writer Frank O'Hara. Yet despite its seeming casualness, O'Hara's poetry shows the impress of his study of models from the French tradition. By contrast, much of current gay male production seems to display little acquaintance with the history of literature. Instead, it is a "home brew" purveying, all too frequently, a bald, explicit recitation of some recent sexual experience—lurid exhibitionism of a not very interesting sort.

Lesbian poets, such as Olga Broumas, Judy Grahn, Joan Larkin, and Audre Lorde, are more concerned both

with the demands of craft and the addressing of subject matter of weight and substance. Inasmuch as their work forms part of the literary currents associated with feminism, it transcends the lesbian/gay paradigm, and deserves to be addressed in a different, larger context.

As has been noted, heterosexuals do not read homosexual poetry. Generally speaking, male homosexual poems are not read by lesbians, and lesbian poems are not read by male homosexuals. This tribalism and subtribalism rob homosexual poetry of universality. It is perhaps a hopeful sign that similar restrictions that once narrowed the audience for black literature have been largely overcome—though gaining the attention of white readers was accomplished only after a considerable effort on the part of critics of both races. It may be that the AIDS crisis and the waning of the sexual revolution have slowed, but not blocked, a similar critical enterprise on behalf of gay and lesbian literature. In the 1980s mainstream acceptance has been gained for the work of a few gay and lesbian novelists (e.g., David Levitt and Rita Mae Brown). The prospects for poetry of same-sex concerns are probably dependent on a revival of interest in poetry as such, which would require the deployment of factors not now on the horizon.

As poetry has been losing its general audience, it is being chosen as an art form by homosexuals in a sort of cultural "hand-me-down" syndrome; yet even among homosexuals it reaches only a very small segment of its target audience. Under such circumstances, it is questionable how much longer traditional printed-page verse can survive as a meaningful literary vehicle for the expression of homoerotic sentiment. Perhaps the future lies in mixed-media combinations, spoken poetry with sound and/or visual images (as in Laurie Anderson's work) or other sensual dimensions yet to be explored (smell, taste, feel).

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Stephen Wayne Foster

POLAND

This major nation of east-central Europe has undergone many vicissitudes. The western Slavs who occupied the area of present-day Poland were first united under the Piast dynasty and Christianized beginning in 966. The crown passed to the Jagiello dynasty, under which Poland, having lost its western territories, then expanded eastward, so that by 1568 the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth embraced not just those two nations but most of Belorussia and the Ukraine as well. The confluence of the Renaissance and the Reformation brought Poland to the zenith of its political and cultural greatness, while a policy of toleration in religion not only spared the country the Protestant-Catholic wars that ravaged Western Europe but also allowed Polish Jewry to enjoy its golden age, while dissenting groups such as Socinians and Unitarians found refuge within its borders. Declining from the mid-seventeenth century onward, Poland after 1718

was virtually a protectorate of the great powers. Between 1772 and 1795 the country was thrice partitioned by Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Under the oppressive rule of the tsars the Poles twice rebelled, while Catholicism kept a grip on the masses as a symbol of opposition to the Lutheran Prussians and the Orthodox Russians. **Nationalism** ultimately triumphed in 1918 with the reconstitution of an independent republic as one of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. It was the discussion of nationality problems in central Europe that introduced the concept of an ethnic or religious **minority** to the English-speaking world. Interwar Poland was racked by economic problems and the inability to find a *modus vivendi* with the non-Polish components of its population. Once again partitioned by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in 1939, Poland was restored in 1945 with a new set of boundaries, the eastern territories having been annexed by the Soviet Union, with large areas of Prussia and Silesia being ceded to the country as compensation for its losses. The Communist regime that long ruled Poland has had to cope with constant unrest from a nation unwilling to be a Russian satellite.

Religious and Legal Background.

Although the reception of Latin **Christianity** and of the medieval version of Roman law entailed the adoption of laws against **sodomy**, there is evidence that the anti-Trinitarian sects which found refuge in Poland were influenced by the Nicodemites and similar trends of thought in Italy to abandon the notion that homosexual sins were the "crime of crimes" which the Scholastic theologians had proclaimed them to be. Even if they did not proclaim this departure from orthodox Christianity openly, they influenced the Quakers in western Europe. Their heritage was still active in the thought of William Penn who reduced the penalty for buggery to a nominal one in his law code for the colony of Pennsylvania (1682).

The partition of Poland meant that four separate codes—the German, the