



LOVE and SEX: The True Lives of the Boys and Men who preferred other Boys and Men

Michael Hone

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The decision to write this book in three parts has its origin in a recent law in France, where I live, allowing gay marriage. Legally, I'm suddenly worth any other guy in this wonderful land. I did come down to earth pretty fast, though, due to the riots the law occasioned. And then there are the rednecks on the quay where I have my boat (and where I'm writing this) who thought they and their sons were in dire danger the moment I ceased concealing my sexual orientation. So I decided that I'd write a book about the fabulous men who preferred men, a proud heritage, my heritage. The first book was wonderfully easy as love between boys and men under the wondrous blue skies of Greece was a given. The Thebans even passed a law proclaiming "that it is illegal for anyone to maintain that sex between men is not beautiful." Life can't get better than that! And then there were the veritable heroes of Marathon, Salamis and the Thermopylae, the Sacred Band and Leonidas. In Rome things became darker. On the one hand we had Caesar who never lived down his vile reputation as having been the beloved of King Nicomedes of Bithynia, while on the other hand, the Bithynian boy Antinous was imposed on Rome by Emperor Hadrian. Soldiers didn't refrain from mocking Caesar, often right outside his tent, but their ribbing was always good-natured and Caesar's reputation never really suffered. In fact, the soldiers respected and perhaps even loved the man. Still, in Rome the word depravity was in the air concerning men who went with men and boys, and the degrading aura of Asiatic decadence tainted practitioners. That said, two emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, were nonetheless wholly male/male oriented. In part three we see that during the Renaissance homosexuality was forbidden even in liberal Florence; but what saved Florence was the fact—the fact—that it was nevertheless practiced by literally all males, some of whom—da Vinci, Caravaggio, Michelangelo, Botticelli and Cellini—were the greatest geniuses to have walked the earth, not to speak of warriors such as Cesare Borgia, diplomats like Machiavelli and Lorenzo Il Magnifico, and the Warrior Pope himself, Julius II. But during the 1400s and 1500s, which is the period covered by this book, sex between males in Florence had taken a pragmatic turn. Death was demanded only when children and young boys (and girls, naturally) were raped or otherwise sexually manhandled. Otherwise everyone was fined, large amounts for men who satisfied their lust on boys, small fines for the boys who rented themselves out. Here is the story of the true heroes of ancient Greece, Rome and Renaissance Italy. It's about the artists, sculptors, painters, writers, philosophers, diplomats, humanists and warriors of those blessed lands. Alcibiades and the Golden Age of Greece, Alexander and Hephæstion, Hadrian and Antinous, da Vinci and Salaì. This is their story, our heritage, my heritage. Supreme men, not just in those times, but of all times.

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