

**LOVE, LUST AND THE HUMAN BODY**



JOHAN MATTELAER &  
BERT GEVAERT

**ROMA**  
● LOVE, LUST ● AND THE HUMAN BODY  
**intima**

**eau**

STERCK & DE VREESE

© 2020 Johan J. Mattelaer & Bert Gevaert |  
Sterck & De Vreese

TRANSLATION FROM DUTCH Ian Connerty

COVER DESIGN Jelle F. Post

LAY-OUT Jelle F. Post

COVER IMAGE Psyche and Amor, also known as Psyche  
Receiving Cupid's First Kiss, 1798, by François Gérard.  
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

ISBN 978 90 5615 583 4

NUR 680|683

THANKS TO

Alexandra De Poorter

*directeur Koninklijke Musea voor Kunsten Geschiedenis,  
Brussel*

Carlos Pereira

*archeoloog, Universiteit van Lissabon*

Christian Laes

*professor oude Geschiedenis en Latijn,  
Antwerpen en Manchester*

Jennifer R. Hill

*uroloog, New York*

Johan Boelaert

*nefroloog, Brugge*

Philip Van Kerrebroeck

*uroloog, Antwerpen*

Renato Jungano

*uroloog, Naples*

Valeria Sampaolo

*responsabile e conservatore Capo delle  
Collezione, Archeologisch Museum, Napels*

Wouter D'Haese

*waarnemend cultuurfunctionaris, Romeins  
Archeologisch Museum, Oudenburg*

Zühmer Thomas

*Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier*

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written consent of the copyright holder Uitgeverij Sterck & De Vreese, postbus 234, 8400 AE Gorredijk, Nederland – [info@sterckendevreese.nl](mailto:info@sterckendevreese.nl).

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.

Sterck & De Vreese is part of  
20 leafdesdichten en in liet fan wanhoop bv

[www.sterckendevreese.nl](http://www.sterckendevreese.nl)

[Bert.Gevaert@sint-lodewijkcollege.be](mailto:Bert.Gevaert@sint-lodewijkcollege.be)  
[johan.mattelaer@skynet.be](mailto:johan.mattelaer@skynet.be)

Procul hinc, procul este, severae!  
Away from here, away from here, prudish nerds!

**OVIDIUS, LIEFDESGEDICHTEN II, 1, 3**

**'YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG'****INTRODUCTION**

- 15 Ancient Rome: a perverts' paradise?  
 15 The purpose and content of this book  
 20 The problem with Roman sources

1. **'AND I SAY YES, YOU LOOK WONDERFUL TONIGHT'**

**ROMAN IDEALS OF BEAUTY... AND UGLINESS**

- 25 A moment of shame  
 27 General characteristics of the ideal body  
 31 A nice handful  
 31 Buttocks, thighs and everything in between  
 34 Skin as white as snow or black as soot?  
 39 Enticing locks  
 40 Eyebrows  
 42 Other body hair  
 44 Make-up  
 44 The natural look?  
 46 Body odour and perfumes  
 46 A well-cared-for mouth  
 46 Turnoffs  
 47 The ugliness of old women  
 49 A word of comfort

2. **'DON'T WANT NO SHORT DICK MAN'**

**IN THRALL OF THE PHALLUS**

- 55 A young girl's sadness  
 57 Size does matter  
 60 From anaconda to zebra ...  
 60 ... to a poem about a sparrow!  
 62 From winged phalluses to phallus amulets  
 64 Willies everywhere!  
 68 Priapus: the undisputed king of the pricks  
 71 Priapus in the picture  
 71 Hermes and his stone penis  
 75 Testis unus, testis nullus  
 75 The Roman aversion for circumcision  
 76 Reversing a circumcision  
 76 A Roman penis piercing?

3. **'SING IF YOU'R GLAD TO BE GAY'**

**LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER**

- 83 A controversial drinking cup  
 85 From sodomite and Uranian to homosexual and gay  
 86 Passive and active sexuality  
 87 Characteristics of an effeminate man  
 90 Characteristics of a mannish woman  
 90 The eunuch as the ultimate effeminate man  
 93 Voluntary castration and transvestism  
 93 Hermaphrodites: the third sex?  
 96 Nancy boys with a name  
 99 A dislike of the deviant  
 101 Gay marriage

4. **'LOVE AND MARRIAGE, THEY GO TOGETHER LIKE A HORSE AND CARRIAGE'**

**MARRIAGE, ADULTERY AND DIVORCE**

- 107 An inspirational suicide by a saintly heroine  
 108 Pudor, the ultimate guideline in the life of the ideal woman  
 109 Vestal Virgins as the incarnation of pudicitia  
 110 The difference between Roman marriage and contemporary marriage in the western world  
 113 The happiest day of your life?  
 116 A romantic wedding night?  
 118 Children, the jewel in the Roman woman's crown  
 119 A happy marriage?  
 122 Adultery and its punishments  
 124 Divorce

5. **'LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX, BABY'**

**SEX IN ITS MANY DIFFERENT FORMS**

- 131 An Italian Kama Sutra and the origins of the porn industry  
 133 The tenderness of a kiss  
 134 Sex: always and everywhere?  
 135 Masturbation  
 138 Variations on a theme  
 139 Female pleasure or sex under duress?  
 140 Anal sex

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 144 | Oral sex: fellatio, irrumatio and cunnilingus |
| 145 | To dildo or not to dildo                      |
| 146 | Paying for love                               |
| 148 | Master and servant                            |
| 150 | Sex symbols                                   |
| 150 | Strange preferences: dwarfs                   |
| 151 | Strange preferences: group sex                |
| 155 | Very strange preferences: animals             |

---

6. 'LET IT GO'

**TOILETS AND HYGIENE**

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 163 | The peeing putto   |
| 166 | From defecating and urinating to<br>shitting and pissing |
| 167 | Toilet talk  |
| 171 | Toilet humour  |
| 174 | Pissing in a pot or pissing al fresco?                   |
| 175 | Urine washes whiter than white!                          |
| 179 | 'Piss doctors' and uroscopy                              |
| 180 | The shame of the humble fart                             |
| 181 | Piles and constipation                                   |
| 186 | Bathing in beauty  |
| 188 | Or bathing in filth?                                     |
| 188 | Seeing and being seen in and around<br>the bathhouse     |

---

7. 'SHE IS A MODEL AND SHE'S LOOKING GOOD'

**ARS ROMANA IMPUDICA IN LATER EUROPEAN ART**

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 195 | Antique lust and decadence in the<br>Paris Salon of 1847 |
| 196 | Bacchus, the gross and obscene drunkard                  |
| 202 | Voluptuous nymphs and bacchantes                         |
| 204 | Venus and her feathered friends                          |
| 207 | The pencil of love                                       |
| 210 | The devil is in the detail (Nietzsche)                   |

---

8. 'SO WE'RE REALLY NOT THAT DIFFERENT, ME AND YOU'

219 **CONCLUSION**

---

222 LIST OF CLASSICAL AUTHORS AND TEXTS

QUICKIES

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 50  | I wanna be your underwear<br><b>SEXY LINGERIE</b>  |
| 78  | I've been looking so long at<br>these pictures of you<br><b>OBSCENE LANGUAGE AND<br/>PORNOGRAPHY</b> |
| 102 | You sexy motherfucker<br><b>OBSCENE GRAFFITI</b>   |
| 126 | Hey you. Don't be silly, put a<br>condom on your willy<br><b>BIRTH CONTROL</b>                       |
| 155 | She drives me crazy<br><b>AFRODISIACS</b>  |
| 190 | She's a maniac<br><b>SEX MANIACS</b>   |
| 214 | It will always be you and me,<br>forever be, eternally<br><b>SEX TILL DEATH DO US PART</b>           |



*Amor and Psyche*, oil painting, 1767-1771, by Louis Jean François Lagrenée (1725-1805), National Museum, Stockholm.





## FOREWORD

---

# PROF. DR. CHRISTOPHER CHAPPLE

I am honoured to have the opportunity to write a foreword to this elegant and learned book from Dr. Johan Mattelaer and Dr. Bert Gevaert.

Dr. Gevaert is a doctor of classical languages and has made a huge number of contributions in the field. Gevaert is well known for his research on the epigrams of the Roman author Marcus Valerius Martialis (40-104 AD), who himself was well known for his extensive corpus of about 1500 epigrams. Martialis is especially famous for the many invectives against his fellow Roman citizens, whose behaviour and appearance he viciously attacks.

Dr. Johan Mattelaer needs little introduction to members of the European Association of Urology. He has made a huge contribution in the field of the history of urology. He became the first chairman of what would go on to become the EAU History Office in the early 1990s, and served as editor for the *de Historia Urologiae Europaeae* series, now on its 26th volume.

In addition, Johan is a prolific author, basing his books on his own research and travels all around the world. He is the primary author of beautifully illustrated and much sought-after books like *For this Relief much Thanks/ Peeing in Art* (2018), *Forbidden Fruit* (2017), *Sexological and other less Logical Stories* (2013), *From Ornamentation to Mutilation: Genital Decorations and Cultural Operations in the Male* (2004), *The Phallus in Art and Culture* (2000) and co-editor of the magnum opus *Europe: The Cradle of Urology* (2010) and *30 Milestones in Urology* (2015).

Johan has also been a fervent supporter of the regular History of Urology Congresses and of course has attended everyone to date. His focus has not only been on Europe but rather the history of Urology Worldwide. Together, Drs. Gevaert and Mattelaer have explored Ancient Roman attitudes to sex, the penis, and

urination, yielding this fascinating single-volume overview of urological history.

I can assure the authors that the EAU Executive and Board fully support their efforts as they contribute greatly to our field. Inevitably, history not only tells us where have been as a specialty, but it tells us our failures as well as successes and gives us pointers as to where and in what way we should be developing our specialty in the future.

I am sure that you will join with me in agreeing that this is yet another compelling read from Johan and his co-author and will be a valued contribution to your library of EAU publications.

My congratulations to both on behalf of the EAU.



Prof. Dr. Christopher Chapple, BSc, MBBS, MD, FRCS (Urol), FEBU, FCSHK (Hon)  
Honorary Professor of Urology, Sheffield  
EAU Secretary General

## FOREWORD

---

# PROF. DR. PHILIP E.V. VAN KERREBROECK

It is a privilege to be invited to write a foreword for the book *Roma intima*. Over the years I got to know the authors: Johan Mattelaer as a prolific urologist-writer that is able to bring a large variation of daily and not-so-daily subjects to a broader audience in an entertaining and visually attractive way and Bert Gevaert as a classicist-teacher who presents a critical appraisal on interpretations of several topics related to classic history. This combination of two authors with so different background and very individual approaches to matters, promises an interesting, original, beautiful and even sometimes funny book. This promise is largely fulfilled in the actual publication you are going to read and look at. This book deals with topics that are still very controversial and considered taboo even in societies that consider themselves as evolved, although sexuality is intermingled in daily life from our primitive beginnings as human beings till actual times. However, as so often history shows us the way, not only how we can develop a contemporary look on sexuality and sexual practices, but even how future generations will appreciate the different aspects of one of the most intimate aspects of human behaviour and even life itself. The authors have reviewed a wealth of topics related to the human body and sexual life. They start as introduction with an overview of several misunderstandings and incorrect interpretations of sexuality and sexual practices in Roman times, as they were formulated based erroneous readings of ancient texts and vicious interpretations of visual erotic remnants. In a first chapter they discuss the definition(s) of beauty and ugliness, as commonly agreed upon in the Roman world, and include also an overview on the practices surrounding the concepts of physical beauty. The second chapter presents, and thanks to the ample illustrations this can be taken literally (sic), the fascination for sexual organs, more especially the male member

or phallus. The penis as ultimate sign of virility was omnipresent in personal and public life of the ancient Romans, and many amulets bear witness of this obsession. As homosexuality did not exist as we see it today and Romans saw it as an active or passive penetration that was widely accepted up to imperial level, and impacted on the political life, a separate chapter is dedicated to non-heterosexual behaviour. Several chapters deal with the different aspects of sexual life in general as it was seen and practiced in ancient Roman times, and a final chapter deals with aberrant or pathological sexual behaviour, as this is not a modern invention, but was part of human life also 2000 years ago.

In between the different chapters specific items are presented as for example the use of anticonception, the popular and medical view on erectile dysfunction and its treatment, the habit of wearing undergarment (or not wearing it), and even graffiti with sexual connotations!

As chairman of the History Office of the European Association of Urology (EAU), I am very happy and grateful that the Board of the EAU accepted and supported our proposal to publish this book at the occasion of the 35th Congress of the EAU in Amsterdam and to present it as a gift to the membership present at the meeting. We hope that this publication may not only be a pleasant and interesting reading, but also may confirm the Latin expression “Nihil novum sub sole” (Nothing new under the sun) as a useful lesson for all of us, not only for our professional activities but also for our ‘regular’ daily life.

Welcome in Amsterdam, welcome at the 35th congress of the EAU and...enjoy *Roma intima*!

Prof. Dr. Philip E.V. Van Kerrebroeck, MD, PhD, MMSc  
Prof. em. of Urology, Maastricht University - Chairman EAU History Office



Cupid and Psyche, 1817, by François-Édouard Picot. Private Collection





# ‘YOU’VE GOT IT ALL WRONG’

DROWNERS, ‘YOU’VE GOT IT ALL WRONG’ (DROWNERS, 2014).

---

## INTRODUCTION

**A**NCIENT ROME: A PERVERTS’ PARADISE?  
On Saturday, 22 March 2014, the *Classici Lovanienses* – the society for graduates in classical and ancient history at the Catholic University of Leuven – organised a Roman evening in the Gallo-Roman Museum in Tongeren. In no time at all, the 150 places were sold out and it didn’t take long before the newspapers also got wind of what was going on. Like some of the participants, the gentlemen of the press were interested to know whether this *cena Romana* (Roman evening meal) would be ‘decadent’. This was simply a roundabout way of asking whether or not anything ‘saucy’ or ‘piquant’ was on the menu – and they weren’t talking about the food! Would there be slaves? Would they be naked? Might there even be a darkened room somewhere, where the more ‘unofficial’ parts of the programme could take place? Many of these questions were no doubt inspired by the countless literary works, comic books, TV series and films that continue to depict the Roman Empire as a den of iniquity, a perfect paradise for paedophiles, homophiles, necrophiles and every other type of -phile. Surely this was the empire ruled by sadistic madmen like Nero and Caligula, where blood (and

other bodily fluids) flowed in torrents and men had a different concubine for every day of the week? Wasn’t it in Ancient Rome that sex and drugs and rock-’n-roll were first invented?

‘Sex sells!’ or so the advertisers tell us. Perhaps that is why *la vie sexuelle* of these Latin lotharios is still seen as being *blutgeil und ganz toll*, even though it is now more than two thousand years ago since it all took place. Perhaps that is the reason why you picked up this book, or borrowed it from a library, or downloaded it somewhere, or maybe even secretly stole it. Or are you looking for something a little more erudite and uplifting than just a quick flick through all the dirty pictures? Perhaps you really want to know more about the intricacies of the intimate life of Roman men and women? You do? Then you have come to the right place, dear reader. This is the book you have been waiting for.

### THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THIS BOOK

In this book, the intimate life of the Romans stands central. We will concentrate on roughly three hundred years of Roman history, from the first century B.C. to the second century A.D. We have chosen these centuries deliberately, not only because it was a period for which many different sources have survived, but also because it corresponds with the height of ‘the grandeur that was Rome’. It was during these centu-

◀ *Psyche and Amor*, also known as *Psyche Receiving Cupid’s First Kiss*, 1798, by François Gérard. Musée du Louvre, Paris.