

Römer, Lucien Sophie Albert Marie von (1873–1965), Dutch writer. Among the papers of von Römer's youth is already to be found notice of his love for a young man. As a student, he started to write learned articles on homosexual topics following the lead of Magnus HIRSCHFELD. He would become an 'Obmann' of Hirschfeld's 'Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee' and a regular contributor to its *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*. His first article for this Yearbook, a biography of King HENRI III of France and Poland, appeared in 1902. With long essays on androgyny and the history of the persecutions of sodomites in eighteenth-century Holland, he opened new terrain for gay studies. He was convinced by the theory of intermediary sexes and created a model that comprised 687,375 variations. He was the first to hold sex surveys among his fellow students and discovered that 2 per cent were exclusively homosexual, 20 per cent had enjoyed homosexual contacts and 85 per cent had masturbated: his statistics were not much different from those of today. He translated NIETZSCHE's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1905) and edited Rochester's seventeenth-century play *Sodom* (1904).

Because of his views he was regularly attacked by scholars and politicians, but he always riposted very firmly. For the Christian-Socialist Rein-leven (Pure Life) group he defended the purity of gay sex in a loving relationship, but no one supported him, not even ALETRINO. His view was harshly rebuffed in the name of a pure life. When the theoretical journal of the Dutch socialist party published a critical

article on homosexuality, he wrote a reply. The rejection of his dissertation by the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Amsterdam may have been influenced by his staunch criticism of one of its professors. The official reasons were that the book was written in German and included offensive imagery and genealogies of sexual perversion in royal families. After this setback, von Römer retreated from sexual science. When SCHORER in 1912 founded a Dutch chapter of Hirschfeld's Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee, von Römer became a member. In 1910, he joined as natural scientist an expedition into the inland of New Guinea, where he discovered unknown plants, some of which received his name. Soon afterwards, he emigrated to the Dutch East Indies, where he married and fathered two sons. In his work as a physician, he kept to his social standpoint and specialised in public hygiene. After Indonesia's independence he stayed in the country, where he died. His papers are in the State Archives in The Hague; they contained a sealed package that was opened in January 2000, which included a booklet of poetry (c. 1894) about his love for a young man who died early, and other material relating to his sex studies.

M. van Lieshout, 'Stiefkind der natuur. Het homobeeld bij Aletrino en Von Römer', in M. Dallas *et al.* (eds) *Homojaarboek 1*, Amsterdam, 1981: 75–105.

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