Attitudes to Homosexuality in Eighteenth-century France

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The history of European attitudes to homosexuality is patchily documented and only partially written. It is widely known, however, that from the thirteenth century, acts of sodomy were punishable by death, though the definition of sodomy poses considerable problems. In France, as elsewhere, the term designated a number of “péchés contre nature” which included onanism, bestiality and even coitus interruptus. But it was also inextricably linked with heresy and, until the Renaissance and occasionally beyond, remained in the first instance a matter for ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The link between sexual and theological unorthodoxy is provided by the rise of neo-manichaeism which had been accompanied, in sects like the Bulgars and, around the tenth century, the Bogomiles, by an aversion for sexual relations in general which were considered offensive in the sight of God and contrary to Christian doctrine. Because the members of such sects were known to find heterosexual contacts distasteful, it was assumed, quite wrongly, that they were therefore sexually inverted. At first, the Bulgari (Boulgres, Bogres), like other unorthodox groups, were outlawed as heretics and were punished as such. But by the thirteenth century, charges of sodomy began to be added regularly to accusations of heresy.1 By the Renaissance, it was not unusual for heretics to be accused of sodomy and sodomites of heresy as a matter of course.

Given the circumstantial connection between heresy and crimes of sodomy, it is not surprising that the Church was the first to establish codes of practice for dealing with offenders. The Third Lateran Council of 1179 ordered the accused to be punished by degradation and penance: the Church had no power to prescribe or enforce the death penalty which was clearly laid down, however, in Holy Writ (Leviticus, xx. 13). Nevertheless, the civil authorities were not slow to provide measures for the treatment of those who had been judged by the Church courts. Bailey quotes Li Livres de Jostice et de Plet, a collection of customary law established in the Orléanais around 1260, which stipulated that the “sodomite prouvé”, whether male or female, was to suffer mutilation (“il doit perdre membre”); recidivists were to be burnt alive. Such prescriptions found their way into Les Établissements de Saint Louis (c. 1272) which ordered both herites and bougres to be sentenced to death. All
heretics, whether charged with sodomy or not, continued to be handed over to the Church for trial, but sentences for convicted bougres—heretics who might also be sodomites—were carried out by the secular magistracy.¹

In its handling of sexual matters, the Church adopted a procedure which reflected the gravity of the sins of unrestrained concupiscence. In the Diocese of Cambrai, one such code, drawn up between 1300 and 1310, distinguished very clearly between the various offences and also between those who committed them. Only the bishop could judge the 'pêchés contre nature' in males over the age of twenty. His pénitenciers heard accusations and confessions concerning unnatural vices practised by women and males under twenty. The curé was considered competent to deal with fornication, onanism and wayward youth.² It was not until the fifteenth century that secular judges, using powers granted by customary law and still associating crimes of sodomy with crimes against God, began burning persons found guilty of committing unnatural practices.

In England, a law enacted during the reign of Edward I in 1290 ordered convicted sodomites to be buried alive, though this sentence does not ever appear to have been carried out. The older practices of hanging men and drowning women, already established by the time of Richard I, seem to have prevailed—though intermittently. As in France, the accused first appeared before a Church court before being handed over to the secular authorities, although, as elsewhere, no great attention was given to sexual inversion as such. In 1533, responsibility for dealing with sodomites (who had not been systematically harassed for long periods) was transferred to the civil courts and the penalty prescribed was death—in practice, by hanging. Thirty years later, Elizabeth’s second Parliament reaffirmed the provisions of the Act which remained on the statute book until 1828, the death penalty being commuted to imprisonment and hard labour in 1861.³ Meanwhile, crimes of sodomy continued to attract the death penalty throughout Europe. In Venice, the first execution took place in 1492 and a monk was burnt in the city as late as 1771.⁴ At Geneva, the first burning dates from 1555 and between that year and 1678, fifty men were accused of sodomy (which still included bestiality) and two dozen died at the stake.⁵ In France, executions for bestiality continued until the end of the seventeenth century,⁶ and capital punishment for male homosexuality remained available to the courts throughout the ancien régime. Subsequently, Napoleon’s Code made no specific mention of homosexuality, though homosexuals were tried under the provisions of article 330 ("outrage public à la pudeur") and 334 ("attentat aux mœurs, en excitant, favorisant ou facilitant habituellement à la débauche ou la corruption de la jeunesse de l’un ou de l’autre sexe au-dessous de l’âge de vingt ans").
The confusion between heresy and the various sexual crimes grouped under the heading of sodomy held in France until the close of the Middle Ages and was thereafter maintained by the sexual element which was frequently an aspect of accusations of witchcraft. During the Renaissance, responsibility for judging sodomites moved out of the Church and into the domain of the State. Sodomy was not a crime d'état, however, but a crime contre les mœurs. Even so, in the exchange, the statutory punishment for heretics was transferred to sodomites. Any person found guilty of the practice and encouragement of homosexuality and allied vices was burnt at the stake. It was a confusion that was to last the life of the ancien régime: Montesquieu was among the first to note that witchcraft, heresy, and sodomy all earned the stake, though there was no necessary connection between them.8

In practice, like rape, prostitution and other sexual offences, sodomy was largely ignored unless accompanied by behaviour likely to constitute a public scandal or to promote the spread of corruption. Indeed, so great was the fear of encouraging inversion, that the words sodomy and pederasty were rarely used outside legal circles and were surrounded by a lasting taboo. Well into the eighteenth century, observers and administrators preferred euphemisms which make interpretation difficult. While “le goût antiphysique” and “le péché philosophique” are clear enough, “la débauche la plus infâme”—as opposed to “la débauche la plus scandaleuse/crapuleuse” which signified heterosexual lewdness—poses considerable problems, though it was much used in police reports in connection with serious sexual crime in eighteenth-century France.9 Nor was the distinction between homosexuality, pederasty and sodomy proper always made clear. Thus the author of Dom Bougre aux Etats Généraux (1789) defines sodomie as an act performed on prostitutes, on wives and on males:8 the order in which he lists the passive agent would seem to suggest that sodomy was not associated specifically with inversion. Other writers chose to shelter behind such terms as hermaphroditisme, la débauche fort désapprouvée des femmes, le vice philandrique, l'amour amphibie, le platonisme, ce vice qui outrage la nature, le plaisir des chevaliers de la manchette, etc. Nerciat indicated something of the linguistic uncertainties when, in 1788, he defends his coining of mignonisme: “nous sommes forçés de le laisser, ne lui connaissant point de décem synonyme.”11

The widespread use of infâme in this context would seem to give a particular meaning to La Mettrie’s exhortation to those who would seek happiness: “...si non content d’exceller dans le grand art des voluptés, la crapule et la débauche n’ont rien de trop fort pour toi, si l’ordure et l’infamie sont ton partage, vautre-toi comme font les porcs.”12 But even here, serious doubts surround the specific resonance of a word which for others—Voltaire, for instance—had quite a different meaning.
But the confusion does not exist merely on the linguistic level. Difficulties also arise in social terms by the existence of a widely accepted double standard. Homosexual inclinations were traditionally tolerated in men who occupied the highest rank of society (like Edward II of England or Henri III of France) and in those who were near to them (Louis xiv’s brother for example). In theory, all others lived under the threat of death. Such toleration—which in some periods, the flamboyant Renaissance being an obvious instance, was extended to members of Court—gave rise to the idea that inversion was a royal or aristocratic exclusive, though from the Middle Ages onward homosexuality was commonly identified with a number of clearly defined social groups: clerks in holy orders, students, sailors, nobles and, notably, the Knights Templar. Normally, these groups were left in peace, though special watch was kept on those who had charge of the young. It was because he had abused his position as master at the Collège Cardinal Le Moine that Maître Nicolas Dadon was sentenced in 1586 “à être pendu et brûlé pour crime de sodomie envers un enfant qui lui était confié.”

As the dangers of heresy receded with time, it was considerations of this kind which tended to arouse official concern, though as we shall see the view persisted that the lower social orders were ignorant of the vices of their betters.

By the seventeenth century in France, the tradition of fearsome punishment and sporadic official action was firmly rooted—as was the notion that homosexuality was an “Italian” vice. Tallement called it “le ragoust d’Italie” and Bussy Rabutin spoke of “la France devenue italienne” while in the following century, the myth was perpetuated throughout Europe. The influence of the effete Latins appeared high on the list of Plain Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy in England (1730); “si vous écoutez le peuple,” wrote Chévrier in the 1760s, “tous les Italions ont ce goût-là.”

But whatever its origins, Louis xiv found it distasteful, remaining all his life “plein d’une juste, mais d’une singulièrè horreur pour tous les habitants de Sodome, et jusqu’au moindre soupçon de ce vice.” It is not surprising therefore to find sodomites punished with the full force of law: in 1661, a group of men were fined, had their tongues removed and were burnt alive for committing unnatural acts. On the other hand, the King curiously tolerated the overt homosexuality of the duc de Vendôme and even during the last, austere years of his reign, members of his Court seem to have been free to sin philosophically. The Princesse Palatine, ever ready to uncover male and female homosexuality in every corner, reports that in practice toleration was theological as well as social:

Ceux qui s’adonnent à ce vice et qui croient dans la Sainte Ecriture s’imaginent que c’était seulement un péché lorsqu’il y avait peu de gens dans le monde et qu’on était ainsi coupable en empêchant qu’il
ne se plaira, mais depuis que la terre est toute peuplée, ils ne regardent plus cela que comme un divertissement. On évite cependant autant que possible d’être accusé de ces vices parmi le peuple, mais entre gens de qualité on en parle publiquement, on regarde comme une gentillesse de dire que. depuis Sodome et Gomorrhé, le Seigneur n’a puni personne pour ces méfaits.19

But if God turned a blind eye, the authorities were vigilant. During D’Argenson’s period of office as Lieutenant général de Police (1697–1718), official attitudes inclined to a prudent state of alert. Paradoxically, given the temper of the times, sentences were relatively light, a phenomenon which is to be explained by D’Argenson’s concern to protect families and to avoid drawing attention to a vice which was better left in the shadows. Cases rarely came to court, for the Lieutenant général, in consultation with Royal Ministers and, after 1711, with the King himself, used his wide discretionary powers to restrain offenders and keep them out of circulation until they had purged their crime or until some alternative course of action had presented itself. Policeman, judge and jury, D’Argenson seems to have taken his responsibilities seriously and for more than twenty years followed a policy of discreet paternalism which, for the most part, met with general approval. Confinement of up to two years in one or other of the prisons of the Hôpital or the Bastille according to social rank, plus a period of exile or forced conscription, appear to have been standard for secular offenders.20 Homosexual priests and abbés could expect to spend a shorter period in the Hôpital before being returned to their diocese where their bishop might deal further with them.21 D’Argenson’s policy was humane rather than simply permissive, for it is quite clear that his department regarded homosexual crimes as serious matters which required a watchful eye to be kept on known offenders. His lists of suspects included dukes and peers of the realm, ambassadors, abbés, gentilshommes, limonadiers and, quite regularly, one Duplessis, “fameux sodomite, qui... se promène tous les jours dans le jardin du Luxembourg pour y séduire de jeunes écoliers”.22

This pattern of minimum intervention continued throughout the century. Action was taken only when specific complaints were laid, when behaviour outrageous to public decency was reported and when offences were committed which involved the corruption of minors. It was a policy of containment which directed its sternest measures against the corruption of the nation’s youth. An abbé Lecomte was arrested in 1714 for attempting to “séduire des jeunes gens et à les attirer dans le désordre”. He was imprisoned, exiled to the seminary at Evreux and was subsequently gaolled for recidivism in the Hôpital where he was to be detained “pour très longtemps”.23 The activities of the abbé Godeau were similarly known
to the police: a former recteur de l'Université, he regularly abused his position to gratify his tastes. For less serious offences against the young (exhibitionism, for instance), public humiliation was standard: "l'exposition au carcan avec un écritau portant ces mots: corrupiteur de la jeunesse." But it was not only the police who worried for the safety of innocence. It had long been believed that the segregation of the sexes in schools and religious houses created conditions in which homosexuality would flourish unless strict precautions were taken. Educators were enjoined to supervise the privacy of their charges, though few were quite as conscientious as the abbé Théru, a teacher at the Collège Mazarin, who denounced sodomites with splendid zeal and even accused Voltaire of pederasty in 1725. The house rules of the Bon Pasteur, an establishment for the reclamation of dissolute women, stipulated that inmates should not dress and undress except in the presence of a responsible official—and such provisions were a regular feature of the institutional lives of the young of both sexes. There were good grounds for such watchfulness, for many écoliers and collégiens were exposed to serious risk: Restif de La Bretonne recalls encountering "le vice philanthrique" while a pupil at the Jansenist choir-school at Bicêtre in 1746. If unnatural practices occurred in colleges and monasteries, it was in spite of strict attempts to prevent them.

D'Argenson’s discreet interventionism, though never seriously questioned in the eighteenth century, was not a policy for all seasons. During the Regency and after, the reaction to the austere last years of Louis xiv was so marked that the police found it increasingly difficult simply to contain sodomy. There was a sharp rise in the incidence of spectacular sexual irregularity in general and, during the 'twenties, a firmer line was taken even though the authorities remained reluctant to use the law fully lest they draw attention of the general public to a vice of which it was thought to be ignorant. In 1719,

on enleva plusieurs personnes des deux sexes dans un café voisin de l'hôtel de Conti, et on les conduisit à Bicêtre, ainsi que plusieurs autres particuliers dans une maison voisine du quai de l'Ecole, pour crime de sodomie.

The matter was settled quickly and quietly, but within three years the situation had got out of hand. In June 1722, a number of young noblemen, "dans un bosquet de Versailles" and in view of the Royal windows, committed acts of indecency by moonlight:

la jeunesse de la cour voulait donner au Roi un goût pour les hommes. Sur quoi la duchesse de la Ferté a dit qu'on remarquait dans l'histoire que la galanterie des Rois roulait, l'un après l'autre, sur les hommes

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et sur les femmes, qu’Henri II et Charles IX aimaient les femmes, et Henri III les mignons; Henri IV aimait les femmes, Louis XIII les hommes, Louis XIV les femmes, et qu’à présent le tour des mignons était revenu.31

The young King’s governor, the maréchal de Villeroy, was unimpressed by such reasoning and took out lettres de cachet which exiled the duc de Boufflers and the marquis d’Alincourt, his grandson, to their estates; the marquis de Rambure was sent to the Bastille. When the King asked why his courtiers had been summarily removed, he was informed that they had torn down fences in the Royal Gardens. The need to protect the King’s innocence explains why the “arracheurs de palissades” were not more severely punished.32 By 1724, according to Barbier, ‘le péché philosophique’ had become ultra-fashionable in aristocratic circles. It was known that the duc de Chartres had no “grande disposition à la masculinité” and yet another scandal had to be covered up when the maréchal de Villeroy himself was discovered to be the Ganymede of the young duc de La Trémoille, First Gentleman of the King’s Bedchamber.33 It was against this background that the abbé Desfontaines was jailed at Bicêtre after being denounced by a sixteen-year-old apprentice in 1725.34

The time was ripe for an example.

In February 1726, Benoît Deschauffours, son of a former directeur des franchises at Le Mans, “grand bougre de son métier”, for repeated acts of overt homosexuality and for running an “école et bordel de sodomie” which supplied the needs of the court, was arrested and sent to the Bastille. He was subjected to the sellette and on 25 May he was burnt alive at the Place de Grève. Mercy was asked for but denied, since “ce crime devient fort commun et que cet homme-là tenait académie”. More than 200 men were implicated. The Bishop of Laon was banished to a seminary in his diocese (as were a number of lesser clergy) and the painter Jean-Baptiste Nattier cut his throat in the Bastille while awaiting trial. The majority of the accused received fairly short jail sentences (of three to six months), for Hérault, though he wished to make the case exemplary, did not believe it possible to deal harshly with all those involved: “cela ferait trop de fracas.” Barbier welcomed his action, but expressed reservations. “Il y avait longtemps qu’il n’y avait d’exécution pour ce crime, et cela maintiendra un peu tous ceux qui sont entichés de ce crime contre nature.” On the other hand, since the affair had received the publicity which was always generated by public executions, he hoped the message would not be misunderstood lest it tend to “illustrer ce crime, et le rendre plus commun, la plupart de ce peuple même ne sachant pas ce que c’est”. Sodomé, he added, was a vice of the noble and upper middle classes and was virtually unknown amongst the populace and the petite bourgeoisie.35
Barbier, of course, was quite wrong. In 1700, the curé of Sauvageon in Sologne reported his experience of 'pêchés contre nature' amongst his parishioners:

Il est trèrs rare que l'on s'accuse des pêchés de sodomie et de bestialité, excepté à la mort ou dans les temps de jubilé. C'est pourquoi il est nécessaire de les interroger, mais il faut que ce soit avec une singulière prudence de peur de leur apprendre peut-être des pêchés qu'ils n'ont jamais commis ni eu par conséquent la pensée de commettre . . . . Ces infâmes et détestables crimes ne leur sont que trop communs et ils ont le malheur de ne s'en accuser presque jamais qu'à la mort ou au jubilé.38

Although such testimony is extremely rare, there are no reasons for believing that the rural parish of Sauvageon was in any way exceptional. It has been argued by historical demographers that sodomy, in its various forms, was a response both to problems of birth control and late marriages. It is probably true, however, that unnatural practices continued to be concentrated within a limited number of social groupings—abbés and Churchmen, collégiens, the naval and military forces, the nobility and probably actors39—along the traditional lines. But Barbier's view was shared by many in the eighteenth century and it lies behind the continuing habit of the authorities to cloak sodomy in mystery and silence.

The fate of Deschauffours was intended as an awful warning. It was not, however, universally heeded. The maréchal d'Uxelles was openly practising homosexuality in the autumn of 1726—"ce vice n'a pas laissé d'avoir de grands hommes pour amis"38—while at least one of Deschauffours's associates, in spite of successive periods of confinement, continued to behave scandalously throughout the 1730s.39 Barbier, with some indignation, also records the impertinent conduct of a visitor to the Hôtel-Dieu who informed a "jeune manoeuvre" that though the doctors were baffled by his case, "il le guèrirait d'un prompt remède. Il a fait tourner cet homme dans cet état-là, et lui a fait le pêché philosophique".40

On the whole, however, Hérault's show of strength succeeded in driving homosexuality back underground where he thought it rightly belonged, and in the years that followed there was a return to the traditional policy of responsible indifference. A Norman Marquis, arrested in 1729 for accosting men in the Tuileries, was returned to his province after an appeal on his behalf was made by the abbé Olivet:

Son crime demande punition; mais dans les conjonctures présentes, vous ne sauriez le punir sans que cela ne fasse un éclat épouvantable à Paris, dans sa famille, dans toute sa province . . . . C'est à vous à examiner si ce n'est pas ici une de ces occasions délicates où, de peur de
faire un plus grand mal, le sage Magistrat relâche de sa plus juste sévérité.\textsuperscript{41}

Hérault was only too ready to accept such arguments which he continued to apply to cases in which discretion was the better part of the law. It was entirely due to his rank that the Prince de Ligne was able to avoid serious trouble when he was arrested for sodomy in 1730: an amicable arrangement, agreeable to all parties, was considered satisfactory solution.\textsuperscript{42} During the 'thirties and 'forties, the police persevered with its attempts to control what it could not prevent—a lettre de cachet for a noble sinner, or a spell in Saint-Lazare or Bicêtre for less exalted offenders, remained the chief methods of restraint for the next half-century—and in practice homosexuals were allowed the same kinds of freedom as were permitted to their equivalents in the heterosexual world. Thus among the sociétés d'amour which flourished around the 1740s were clubs catering for inverts—just as there were in London, according to Holloway's The Phoenix of Sodom (1813)—and not one was raided or closed. Like the Aphrodite club of which Nerciat speaks in the 1780s, they seemed to be protected against "l'animadversion de l'autorité publique (si sévère, comme on sait, contre le libertinage porté à certains excès)".\textsuperscript{43} Discretion, therefore, was the price of homosexual freedom.

Of course, dues were also exacted by the public at large which is always mistrustful of departures from norms, though it is difficult to assess the extent of any social stigma attached to the inverted. Ravaisson comments that D'Argenson's policemen were no more shocked by acts of sodomy than they were by acts which infringed the rules of Lent\textsuperscript{44} and the same neutrality is observable in police reports throughout the century. However, it would be unwise to draw general conclusions from police attitudes, even though arrested homosexuals were treated no differently from other categories of prisoner. What is more revealing, perhaps, is the history of the word bougre which had started in the twelfth century as bogre (=heretic), turned into bougre in the thirteenth when it meant sodomite/heretic/usurer, and became largely archaic in this sense in the sixteenth century. Bougre came rather to mean 'un misérable' and the seventeenth century normally used it in this sense, though the sexual connotation had not disappeared: the Thrésor de la Langue française (1606) defines bougre as paedico, pederastes and Rondeau's French–German dictionary (1639) gives sodomite. However, in the Age of Enlightenment, the old word was revived as a term of abuse. The anonymous Anecdotes pour servir à l'histoire secrète des Ebugors (A Medosio, 1733) anagrammised the word and satirised those it designated. The word was current in this pejorative sense by the mid-century and Collé uses it in this way in his Journal. Chévrier called Caraccioli "un
So...it m’a paru que les folliculaires sont pour la plupart des crasseux chassés des collèges, qui n’ont jamais pu parvenir à être reçus dans la compagnie des dames: ces pauvres gens, pressés de leurs vilains besoins, se satisfont avec les petits décrottoirs du quartier; c’est ce qui était arrivé à l’ex-Jésuite Desfontaines, prédécesseur de l’ex-Jésuite Fréron.

It is a none too delicate thrust which manages to be offensive to journalists and Jesuits in general and to Desfontaines and Fréron in particular. Even so, there is little evidence to suggest any marked degree of public revulsion against homosexuals. The author of Dom Bougre aux États Généraux does make it plain that gitons and bardaches were widely scorned for acting as passive partners: “il est constant qu’ils ne le font que par avarice, puisqu’ils n’ont aucun plaisir et qu’ils s’exposent au mépris et aux sarcasmes, bien plus que les bougres.” Moreover, he indicates that the homosexual gained public sympathy precisely because the law held him to be a great sinner: “L’excès du mal vient peut-être de l’excès de la peine. Brûler, c’est bien sérieux, et qui dénoncerait un homme qu’on doit brûler s’il est convaincu?” The eighteenth century may well have ridiculed effeminate men, but it does not appear to have vilified them.

In intellectual circles, attitudes were similarly ambivalent. It would seem that medical opinion, while attributing homosexual promiscuity to the corruption of manners, envisaged the invert as a physical ‘monster’ who was constitutionally deprived rather than wicked. On the other hand, the philosophes who, to a man, denounced celibacy, were inclined to judge the homosexual as a man who denied his civic responsibilities. In the time that had elapsed since Louis XIV’s courtiers believed the world
to be sufficiently populated, a newer view had triumphed amongst economists and demographers who now saw national prosperity as being rooted in a strong population. Many shared Montesquieu’s view that “la continence publique est naturellement jointe à la propagation de l’espèce”, though most of their arguments were directed against the irresponsible heterosexual who kept mistresses and paid prostitutes. Rousseau was one of the rare spirits who found homosexuality physically repugnant, though in L’Espace des Lois (Book XII, ch. vi) Montesquieu made no attempt to diminish the “horreur” in which crimes against nature were held. On the contrary, they should be severely punished since they give one sex the weaknesses of the other and converts “une jeunesse heureuse” into “une vieillesse infâme”. Even so, by concluding that unnatural vices were the product of social determinants (he quotes the military exercises of the youth of Ancient Greece, the college education provided in France, and the harems of the Orient), he lessened the impact of a vice which, he also suggests, had been much exaggerated by the Church. In 1777, Diderot was similarly tempted to account for “le goût anti-physique des Américains” by attributing it to the separation of the sexes forced upon Indian tribes by the need to hunt far afield. He also implied that such practices are unnatural in a philosophical sense: since nature cares only for species and not individuals, the invert, like other deviants, cannot survive nor does he have any consciousness of those “idées de moralité” on which civilised nations must depend. Yet earlier, in the Suite de l’Entretien, he was quite prepared, like Sade after him, to concede that such impulses were natural since they demonstrably occurred—“Tout ce qui est ne peut être ni contre nature ni hors de nature”—and argued that since they were natural they could not therefore be wrong.

In the Dictionnaire philosophique (art. ‘Amour nommé socratique’), Voltaire was prepared to make allowances for the “jeune Alcibiade” yet considered male love “une abomination dégoûtante dans un matelot hollandais et dans un vivantier moscovite”. Like Beccaria (Dei delitti e delle pene, ch. 31), he believed it to be a youthful error which was encouraged by segregated education and urged that the punishment for sodomy be made to fit the crime. Dictionary-makers, however, still tended to judge sodomy instead of defining it (“cet abominable péché de la chair contre nature”—César de Rougefort, 1685; “le crime de ceux qui commettent des impuretés contraires même à l’ordre de la nature”—Encyclopédie, art. ‘Sodomie’) and while many, in search for happiness, were prepared to defend voluptuousness at large, few it seems were eager to justify homosexuality. Moralists, such as Mercier, took the sterner view and contrasted the miserable lot of those who practice “ces vices honteux” with the sweetness of “les passions douces”:
Le magistrat qui tient un registre secret des prévaricateurs des lois de la nature, peut s’effrayer de leur nombre: il doit réprimer les meurs coupables qui vont jusqu’au scandale; mais hors de là, quelle cir conspection! La recherche deviendrait aussi odieuse que le crime: quelle étonnante effronterie dans ces vices nouveaux! Ils n’avaient pas de noms parmi nous il y a cent ans; aujourd’hui les détails de ces débordements entrent dans nos entretiens . . .

And indeed, as this damp debate sputtered around him, the “sage magistrat” persevered with his modest policy, though he fought a losing battle.

In spite of the declining image of the “prévaricateurs des lois da la nature”—Mirabeau père was maliciously called “l’ami des hommes” for reasons other than his book and his philosophy—sodomites do not appear to have been excluded from society by reason of their sexual tendencies. At Court, the homosexual adventurer was considered no less a galant than the many womanisers who saddened the moralists. The duc de La Trémoille, whom we saw exiled in 1724, went on to earn admiration as a soldier in the Italian campaign, while the Bishop of Laon, who sinned with Deschauffours, played a public role in the religious quarrels of the 1730s. Clearly, involvement in even a notorious scandal did not constitute a bar to public service, though in fact very few leading eighteenth-century figures, in any field, were homosexual. What Collé said of the duc de Vendôme summarises the attitudes of many contemporaries to the homosexual: “il était b***, mais d’ailleurs le meilleur de tous les hommes.”

But while sodomites were tolerated, their position was precarious. Those who overstepped the tacitly understood limits were promptly imprisoned and harsh punishment was meted out to those who did not possess the immunity of class. In 1745, for instance, two men, former associates of the bandit Raffiat (who had been broken on the wheel in 1742) were condemned “à avoir la langue percée, à être pendus et brûlés pour blasphèmes et sodomie.” Sentence was carried out with a minimum of publicity—no echo is to be found in the memoirs of the time—and it is likely that the charge of blasphemy alone was formulated, for any airing of homosexual scandal was still considered potentially very damaging. But the situation deteriorated and by 1750 a further example was felt to be necessary.

In June 1750, action was taken against an apprentice cabinet-maker, aged 18, and a pork-butcher, aged 20, who were arrested by the watch in the street in flagrante delicto. At first, it was thought that they would be sent to Bicêtre which, by this time, was the usual fate of such men. However, the law was fully applied to their crime, ostensibly to remind
the public of the awful nature of their offence but in large part to
demonstrate to the Parisian populace, still restless after the "enlèvements
e d'enfants", that the authorities were the ever-watchful guardians of
justice and morality. The two men, mercifully strangled before the fire
was lit, were duly executed at the Place de Grève: "l'exécution a été
faite pour faire un exemple; d'autant que l'on dit que ce crime devient
très commun, et qu'il y a beaucoup de gens à Bièvre pour ce fait."
Curiously enough, "on n'a point crié de jugement pour s'épargner
apparemment le nom et la qualification du crime. On en avait crié, en
1726, pour le sieur Deschauffours pour crime de s...". Barbier also
noted that the example—which was clearly not too much of an example—
was the easier to make since neither of the accused had any social
connections.60

Occasionally, voices were raised in protest against such horrific
punishments. Casanova, for one, found it difficult to understand the
need for the strict laws on the statute books of England, France and
Spain and recommended the more civilised toleration in Italy where
male prostitution was not uncommon.61 Of course, male prostitutes were
to be had in Paris, where the Tuileries was the traditional temple of male
love. When Boutet de Monval of the Comédie Française was picked up
there in 1781 for the fifth time, Le Noir advised him to leave Paris,
a judgement which the Mémoires secrets described as wise:

Ce crime devenu très commun et même fort répandu à la Cour, a
besoin d'une indulgence qui ne pourrait pas avoir lieu si les loix qui
le concernent étaient mises en vigueur; on aime mieux fermer les yeux
sur les coupables pour ne pas le propager encore davantage par la
publicité.62

Such a view, essentially still that of Barbier's day, continued to draw
support even in the face of a worsening situation. By 1783, according
to Lachaumont, the 'beau vice' had become so widespread "qu'il n'est
point aujourd'hui d'ordre de l'état depuis les ducs jusqu'aux laquais et
au peuple qui n'en soit infecté". The commissaire Foucault, who had
special responsibility for homosexual crime, kept, as Mercier suspected,
a register which was believed to contain the names of as many sodomites
as there were female prostitutes in the capital, about 40,000 according
to the Mémoires secrets. "Il est aussi des lieux publics de prostitution en
cette genre et au jardin des Tuileries on connaît un canton uniquement
affecté aux gytons qui viennent chercher fortune." In October of the
same year, an ex-priest named Pascal was broken alive on the wheel—"il
y avait du monde jusque sur les toits"—without first being strangled as
had been allowed in the most recent executions: mercy was denied because
the convicted man had stabbed a 'petit savoyard' seventeen times for
But even this, the most brutal of eighteenth-century executions for homosexual offences, did nothing to hold back the growing popularity of 'le péché philosophique' which had evidently, since Barbier's day, become much more democratically spread throughout the population. By the end of 1784, there was reputed to be a male seraglio at Versailles itself and the King was of a mind to exact full retribution. But he was restrained by the traditional argument that to invoke the statutes would ruin families and draw attention to a vice which should be left in the dark. Louis XVI reluctantly acquiesced and exiled the ring-leaders to their estates. Meanwhile the scandals continued. In Franche-Comté, the cousin of le père Élisée, one of the most famous sacred orators of his generation—and also one of the most debauched—was charged with sodomy and fled to Rome to escape arrest. The police responded by stepping up the pressure: Mètra reports that 700 pederasts “de tous les rangs” had been arrested during 1784. But they were no more able to clean up the Tuileries than the Palais Royal, while foreign embassies continued to pose extremely delicate problems: in 1788, members of Tippou-Sahib's entourage were involved in the seduction of a fifteen-year-old Parisian youth whose mother, however, was placated by a large sum of money. And thus it was that the ancien régime bequeathed to the Revolution yet another of the many problems it had failed to solve.

For official attitudes to sodomy in the eighteenth century, which may be seen as enlightenment paternalism or the worst kind of prervarication, had been a matter of expediency. As we have seen, it was rooted in the unsubstantiated view that crimes of sodomy were crimes of class, and it depended on tradition rather than on the statute book. There were only three cases of note in which the full sentence was applied: all involved commoners and all were dictated by political rather than legal considerations, namely, they were exemplary. Yet it should be remembered that with the exception of these cases, it was a policy which was consistent with legal action in other areas where punishment was regularly made to fit the social rank of the accused rather than his crime. The monied and the well-connected were exiled to their estates, reparation consisting of social disgrace and whatever hindrance to their careers that this implied. Lower down the scale, periods of imprisonment in the hierarchy of jails for varying periods were considered sufficient: the accused were taken out of circulation and their emules suitably deterred. At the lowest level, jail was merely a preliminary to other forms of sequestration: deportation, the galleys and forced military conscription were used in conjunction with other social needs—for colonial purposes or for keeping up the strength of the army. But it is quite clear that, though crimes of sodomy were regarded as serious, and though homosexual concupiscence
was outlawed by the Church, the authorities were satisfied that little more could be done to protect public decency. Providing that the homosexual was discreet in his behaviour, he was left in peace. But any connection with organised vice or, more important, with the seduction of minors, was regarded as a serious breach of public order, and action was as strong as it was swift.

Female homosexuality presented, though less frequently, even more delicate problems. In theory, the medieval punishments were available to the courts throughout the ancien régime. May has found evidence that lesbians were burnt and hanged in the sixteenth century though such sentences do not appear to have survived into the seventeenth century. Sapphism continued to be practised, however, though its incidence and social distribution are difficult to define. The two cases quoted by May involved petites bourgeois — it is unlikely that upper class women were seriously threatened for their sexual tastes — and it is certain that lesbianism featured in the life both of the convent and the Court.

Of course, there were many violent and crude attacks on sapphism and such outbursts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were frequently linked with the theological misogyny which was also responsible for accusations of witchcraft. Lesbians drew far more contempt and ridicule than their male counterparts and many women were accused of a vice which was obviously considered damaging to reputations: Mme de Sévigné, Christina of Sweden, Catherine of Russia and, most notoriously, Marie-Antoinette were all attacked for the most heinous moral turpitude. Although such reports may be exaggerated, and when due allowance is made for vindictiveness, female inversion was doubtless to be found at all levels of society and in particular among groups which brought women together: religious communities, convent schools and, of course, the Royal Court.

Around the turn of the century, D'Argenson was inclined to proceed with lesbians as with dissolute women in general. The notorious Mme Murat was not formally charged, in spite of repeated warnings, and the Lieutenant général, taking account of her birth and connections, judged that she and her kind were best dealt with by exile or confinement to any convent that would have her — and added that any convent that would have her was not worthy of the name. He was plainly shocked by her "attachement monstrueux pour les personnes de son sexe", and for the unruly Mme de Nantiat in particular, and his reaction was shared by others: "Les horreurs et les abominations de leur amitié réciproque font une juste horreur à tous leurs voisins." This case, one of the more revealing of the relatively small number of formal proceedings against lesbians in the eighteenth century, makes it clear that unlike sodomites
(who stood to lose their lives as well as their freedom), the devotees of Sappho were not seriously troubled. Official action was restricted to the scandalous nature of other offences connected with the crime and a spell of detention arranged by the police or by a lettre de cachet, according to social rank, was the State's answer to 'la tribaderie'. Debauched actresses, the unquiet entretenue and the streetwalker received similar treatment.

Of course, as Bachaumont pointed out, lesbianism "a toujours été en vogue chez les femmes, comme la pédérastie chez les hommes". But if it was indeed practised regularly, it was discreetly. Sapphic love was part of the general depravity of the Regency but it never attained the notoriety which, at thirty-year intervals, prompted the authorities to make an example of defiant male homosexuals. It has been suggested that women were more careful than the men, but the impression gained from reading the memoirs of the period is that lesbianism was practised by a very small minority and then normally in the upper reaches of society where financially independent women were able to indulge their tastes. There are documented cases, of course. The marquise de Listenoy was imprisoned briefly in 1730 by a lettre de cachet intended to contain her sapphic adventures: during her detention at Vesoul with her companion Mme de Saint-Lambert, "elles avaient avec elles je ne sais quelle petite fille qu'elles avaient accoutumée à dire papa à l'une et maman à l'autre". But such examples are rare and records of police intervention are extremely infrequent.

But in the early 1770s, 'la tribaderie' emerged into the open, thanks mainly to the scandalous conduct of a number of actresses and Opera girls who "n'en font point mystère et traitent de gentillesse cette peccadille". The leaders of the new fashion were Mlle Arnould and Raucourt who, though periodically driven into the arms of rich male keepers for financial reasons (female equivalents being harder to find), maintained lesbian relations in the most public manner. They suffered personally and professionally for their inclinations. In December 1777, la Raucourt was voted out of the Comédie Française by her colleagues who complained that "l'inconduite et le libertinage de cette actrice répugnaient à l'honnêteté de leur société": it took two years and an order from the King himself to reinstate this talented actress among her grumbling co-sociétaires. In 1778, she and her lover Mlle Soucck fled to Hambourg to escape their creditors. There, for their scandalous behaviour, they were sentenced "à être fouettées, marquées et bannies".

Though the King intervened on her behalf in 1779, it should not be thought that Louis xvi in any way condoned her inclinations. In 1774, he spoke sharply to one of the Ladies of his Court about "un égarement de sens inexplicable pour la plupart des femmes", for where Raucourt
had led others had followed." The hint of lesbianism which Laclos added to the character of Mme de Merteuil (letters 38, 63) was therefore very much a reflection of a social reality.

The police did not intervene at all in the matter of Raucourt's inversion, though she was jailed regularly for debt, for failure to comply with the orders of her company and for other misdemeanours common to members of the troupe. She and her kind were detained in the For l'Évêque and at Sainte-Pélagie for precisely the same reasons and in precisely the same way as their heterosexual sisters. Outside the theatre, the husband of a lesbian wife or the father of a sapphic daughter took out lettres de cachet while lower down the social scale the police dealt summarily with disorderly lesbians much as they had been doing since D'Argenson's day, though the incidence of women detained for this crime appears to have been low. Moralists deplored the tribadic fashion, but the public treated lesbians with the mockery it reserved for the woman 'sur le retour' who took a young and vigorous lover. Although we have found it nowhere stated, the official view was one of extreme reluctance to intervene to curb an activity which was not, except as a form of debauchery, regarded as a crime.

The eighteenth century thus refused to look squarely at homosexuality, preferring to cast sidelong glances at matters indirectly associated with it. For theological reasons, the Church was opposed to all 'pêchés contre nature', but its commitment to its obligations was weaker in this area than in many others: the punishment for sodomy and bestiality continued to be confused with blasphemy which was clearly the greater crime. The police had a statutory obligation to suppress homosexuality, but crimes of inversion were rarely treated differently from crimes of debauchery in general, sodomy in official eyes being but one of many categories of sexual misconduct—the seduction of minors, rape, scandalous behaviour and the other crimes de luxe—which caused far more concern and generated much prompter action. The intellectual attitude—that it was part of the pursuit of happiness, that it was medically a 'monstrosity'—tended on the whole to minimise homosexuality by overlaying it with abstract generalisations, though such apologies as there were remained oblique, hesitant and tentative. Similarly, though the economists denounced sterile sexual practices, they spent far more time attacking adultery and fornication as the real threats to marriage and therefore to the cause of population. Many observers confessed to feeling concern for the public good in times when (to use the often-repeated phrase) "ce crime devient, dit-on, très commun" and they uttered the appropriate warnings. But they too were far more concerned with the dangers of conventional misconduct—which, to be fair, were quantitively greater—and cannot
be said to have resisted the progress of homosexuality with any great zeal.

Thus while both male and female inversion was for the wider public an object of disdain and mockery, neither figured very prominently on the list of the century's concerns. Nor did they make much of an appearance in literature until the very end of the century when Nerciat and Sade moved beyond the libertine and gallant tradition into altogether murkier areas. Homosexual themes may occasionally be found in the work of the 'poètes gaillards' and in popular chansonniers where it is used as a satirical weapon. But in the novel, male homosexuals are chiefly remarkable by their absence. At most, the young hero may become the object of the unnatural affections of a teacher, preacher or lecher, but he inevitably escapes and goes on to greater heterosexual things. Such mishaps most frequently occur in the lightly erotic/exotic tales which interested readers especially in the first half of the century, for it was popularly believed that Turks and Orientals in general were lovers of men: "chez les Asiatiques... des particuliers ont un grand nombre de femmes qu'ils méprisent, tandis que les autres n'en peuvent avoir", explained Montesquieu. The picture, broadly speaking, is true of the lesbian in literature. Both May and Fauchery conclude that very little of female inversion found its way into the novel. It makes an appearance in Grammont (1713), in the person of Miss Hobart, and it was discussed in the abbé du Prat's Vénus dans le Cloître (1719). The theme of lesbianism in the harem, of which there are hints in the Lettres persanes for instance, was to become popular though authors rarely allowed sapphic adventures to go much beyond the limits of mild titillation. Of course, lesbianism was singled out by the philosophes as one of the reasons why convents were undesirable, but here Diderot's Religieuse is not only the best but, as Georges May has shown, virtually the only example of a detailed treatment of the subject. Fauchery is disposed to find a whiff of homosexuality in the relationship between Julie and Claire in La Nouvelle Héloïse and if, to these examples, we add the cryptic remarks of Mme de Merteuil and a handful of conventional ploys in novels and stories—"l'amant jaloux d'une femme rivale", for instance—all of which are self-confessedly 'romancesques', then the repertoire of sapphic love in eighteenth-century fiction is quickly exhausted.

Neither good taste nor an abnormal dose of moral responsibility in writers may be used to explain why they so rarely tackled homosexual themes. Society at large and the literature it got were far from prudish. The Regency set an appalling standard of personal morality. At Court, sexual misconduct was rife and spectacular, while outside it marriage was attacked by both amateur and professional fornicators. Not surprisingly, there was a steady trade in obscene books and pictures and an even wider appetite for genteel and socially tolerated pornography: the contes

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exotiques and histoires galantes by Crébillon fils, Voisenon and Caylus, for instance, or the licentious contes en vers which went further than La Fontaine had ever done, all retained a faithful readership. For the most part, these stories furnish episodes of stately tumbling: of the sadism of Sade, there are surprisingly few anticipations.

This is not to say, however, that writers and public were entirely uninterested in sexual deviation. Rarely in history have there flourished quite such outrageous transvestites. The abbé de Choisy, who spent eighteen months as an actress, preferred to dress as a woman and wrote his memoirs from the feminine standpoint. A contemporary of his, the abbé d’Entragues, lived “comme une femme, avec du rouge, des mouches et dans des occupations molles”.

But none was more extraordinary than the Chevalier d’Eon who for more than thirty years kept the whole of Europe guessing at his sex. In the 1720s, Lady Mary Wortley Montague announced that there were three sexes—men, women and Hermaphrodites; by the 1780s, Mercier, appalled by the confusion in dress, manners and morals, reported that “il n’y a plus qu’un sexe”. Throughout the century, with its taste for masques and substitutions, for foppish men and dominant women, the mood of sexual ambivalence dominated cultured society.

Of course, none of this was new: Shakespeare’s boy actors were merely a part of a wide-ranging baroque tradition of hermaphrodite confusion to which the Age of Enlightenment remained faithful. In the novel, heroines dress as soldiers in order to follow the men they love; as priests to escape from convents or to get into monasteries to pursue their amours; as pages to spy on or surprise the object of their affections. Conversely, while grown men rarely don petticoats, the adolescent boy arrested at that stage of his development where male and female have yet to assert their claims, emerges with all the force of a type. Many a youth is described as having “l’air d’une jeune fille” and is admired for it. Even the Voltaire of the Dictionnaire philosophique could wax almost lyrical:

Souvent un jeune garçon, par la fraîcheur de son teint, par l’éclat de ses couleurs et par la douceur de ses yeux, ressemble pendant deux ou trois ans à une belle fille; si on l’aime, c’est parce que la nature se méprend: on rend hommage au sexe, en s’attachant à ce qui en a les beautés, et quand l’âge a fait évanouir cette ressemblance, la méprise cesse.

Chérubin, like Faublas, has all the trappings of the androgyne, an asexual figure as much respected in life as in literature: Casanova fell in love with Bellino/Thérèse, a castrat who turned out unexpectedly to be a girl.44 Even the ease with which the ideal of male friendship is expressed—from Tiberge to Restif’s Gaudet d’Arras—without the least trace of that self-consciousness which has led post-Freudian readers to detect homosexual
inclinations in say, Vautrin's affection for Rastignac, would appear to support the view that whatever linguistic and social taboos surrounded homosexuality in the eighteenth century, they were far weaker than this older and more deeply-rooted tradition. The fulsome letter-writing style, the readiness with which men shed tears and showed the symptoms of conventional feminine sensibility, the extravagant fashions in dress which turned women into 'amazones' and men into gaudy peacocks. the very use of the word 'hermaphrodite' to indicate inversion in either sex—all suggest a widespread confusion of sexual roles. To some extent, such tendencies were conscious, for a measure of experimentation and of defiance of social norms is clearly involved. But it would seem reasonable to conclude that the divisions between the sexes were less clearly drawn than in our own times and if indeed there was in the collective unconscious an urge towards androgyne, then we have perhaps isolated the major reason for the eighteenth century's lack of interest in homosexuality. In the absence of strong taboos and interdictions, the very notion of sexual identity was blurred and failed to function—as it does nowadays, very sensitively—as a crucial response in our detection of those signs which threaten our masculinity or femininity. Proust remarked that "Il n'y avait pas d'anormaux quand l'homosexualité était la norme". Without going as far as to suggest that androgyne was the norm in eighteenth-century French society, it would seem that the Age of Enlightenment was in this, at least, an Age of Innocence whose loss has brought no measurable benefit.

REFERENCES


6. Ibid., 1026.

was one of the usual charge made against sorcerors; by the eighteenth century, witch hunts were rare but unnatural sexual practices remained traditionally associated with crimes against God and were punished as such.


9. According to Robert, *pédérastie* entred the language in 1580 and *homosexualité* in 1906. Presumably, before these dates, there was no need for the distinctions which these terms imply.


13. A. F. S952, fol. 79. See also Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, ms. 1775, Suppl. F, 533, which concern Antoine Ranson, a *curé* in the diocese of Beauvais, who was tried for attempting to seduce a novice in 1614.

14. See B.N. A.F. 10969–70, which gives details of the trial of forty-eight men accused of sodomy between 1540 and 1692 by the *Parlement* of Paris. The list is incomplete but nevertheless provides confirmation for the view that action against offenders was intermittent: in the period 1600–14, for instance, there were no fewer than sixteen cases. It is also noticeable that such trials became less frequent in the second half of the century when the number of accusations against sorcerors also fell away: charges of sodomy, as of bestiality, were a customary feature of witch-hunts and help to explain the lasting confusion between sodomy and blasphemy. See ref. 7 above. Similar punishments were meted out to sodomites in the provinces: in 1610, Jean-Imbert Brunet, a priest, was sent to the stake by the *Parlement* of Provence (B.M. of Carpentras, ms. 1787, fol. 237). Colbert’s *ordonnance* of July 1682 significantly reduced the number of trials for witchcraft.


21. D’Argenson, op. cit. (ref. 20), 175–4; Ravaisson, op. cit. (ref. 20), xi, 213–16.

22. Ravaisson, op. cit. (ref. 20), xi, 5.

23. Ibid., xiii, 181.

24. Ibid., xlv, 68.
25. Encyclopédie, art. 'Sodomie'. For flagrant breaches, offenders were exiled and sometimes sent to the galleys.


27. Ravaisson, op. cit. (ref. 20), xii, 102–3, 104–5, 121–2, 123–4; Voltaire's Correspondence, Best. 224.


33. Barbier, Chronique, i, 560–1, 184–5.

34. T. Morris, "L'abbé Desfontaines et son rôle dans la littérature de son temps", SPEC, xix (1961), 38–47.


36. Quoted by F. Lebrun, op. cit. (ref. 19), 93–94. The jubilé was instituted in 1300 and was the occasion of general absolution and pardon. The period was reduced to fifty and then to twenty years and in addition further papal jubilés were declared to mark solemn events such as the election of a Pope or the celebration of Holy Wars.

37. And especially those of the Théâtre Italien, the actor Véronèse in particular (Chévrier, Le Colporteur, 210). Chévrier also reports that the husband of the promiscuous Deschamps of the Opéra was a "proxénète de gitons" (ibid., 248). Montesquieu mentions schoolboys as a high-risk group (L'Esprit des Lois, i, 205) and in 1789 Dom Bougre aux États généraux, still echoing the traditional categories, designates as 'sodomites', "les écoliers qui le font par polissonnerie, les soldats par défaut d'argent, les moines par nécessité" (503).

38. Barbier, Chronique, i, 445.

39. Ravaisson, op. cit. (ref. 20), xiv, 55.

40. Barbier, Chronique, ii, 1, January–February 1727. The man was interrogated but was released in the absence of eye-witnesses to his crime.

41. Ravaisson, op. cit. (ref. 20), xix, 212.

42. Marais, Journal et Mémoires, iii, 151.

43. Nerciat Les Aphrodites, in L'Œuvre, op. cit. (ref. 11), 207.

44. Ravaisson, op. cit. (ref. 20), xi, 2, note 6.

45. Chévrier, Le Colporteur, 154.

46. Le Roux's Dictionnaire comique (1735) describes bougre as "fort insolent et fort libre, de manière qu'on ne voit guère un honnête homme le prononcer". Richelieu (1728) however minimises the indecency: "à présent il signifie un coquin, un perdu d'honneur et de réputation, enfin un homme de mauvaise vie." The Dictionnaire de Trévoux (1743

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and 1762) gives “nonconformiste en amour”, an expression also used by Boyer in 1729. The word rarely appears in dictionaries in the second half of the century which suggests perhaps that by that time bougre had ceased to be part of the socially acceptable vocabulary.

47. Barbier, *Chronique*, i, 425.
49. Dom Bougre aux États généraux, 305. Our italics.
52. Rousseau, Œuvres complètes (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959— ), i, 66–69, 105–6 (Les Confessions).
54. Mauzi, in his chapter on pleasure (566–431) mentions no outright apologist of homosexuality.
57. Feydeau de Marville, *Lettres... au ministre Maurepas... Publiées par A. de Boislisle* (3 vols, Paris, 1896), ii, 135. Piercing the tongue with a hot iron was an ancient punishment for blasphemy; it had been renewed as recently as 1686, when it was made the penalty for blasphemous oaths among soldiers.
58. Late in 1749 and throughout the first half of 1750, the archers began rounding up children, adolescents, vauriens and prostitutes with a view to deporting them to Louisiana for colonial purposes. This new presse, which evoked memories of that of 1719–20, led to riots and several officers of the watch were killed. In August 1750, three men were hung for their part in the riots; the authorities staged a large show of force, but the execution passed off peacefully. "Une punitio si tardive ne fait point sur le peuple la même impression qu'il est nécessaire qu'elle fasse pour notre repos et notre sûreté", remarked Collé (i, 170–2). In fact, the burning of the two sodomites had begun the process of public reassurance which was reinforced simultaneously by the public disgrace of La Moyon, a procuress, who was paraded through the streets seated backwards on a donkey wearing a sign round her neck which read: maquerelle publique. She was branded and banished from Paris. This, like the execution of the two homosexual workmen, was an extremely rare sentence and was clearly intended to mollify the populace: La Moyon's offence was the prostitution of minors. See Barbier, *Chronique*, iv, 448.
63. Ibid., xxvii, 57–58, 4 December 1784.
64. Loc. cit., and xxviii, 151, 19 February 1785.
66. Mémoires secrets, xxxiii, 133, 11 February 1787.
68. See Porphyrje Petrovitch, "Recherches sur la criminalité à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle", Crimes et Criminalité en France sous l'ancien régime, 17e–18e siècles (Cahiers des Annales, Paris, 1971), 187–261. This study of 929 cases judged by the Châtelet shows how few sexual offenders were brought to trial. Of this number, only 15 (1.6%) may be classed as 'crimes de luxure' or, in more modern terms, 'attentats aux mœurs'. No homosexuals appeared before the judges during this period.
69. May, Diderot et 'La Religieuse', 105–6. E. William Monther, op. cit. (ref. 5), 1029, records that a lesbian was drowned (by the baignade) at Geneva in 1568—the single instance of such punishment for female inversion in the documents examined. The baignade, of course, was a traditional test for witches.
70. May, Diderot et 'La Religieuse', 118–34, reviews the position in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
74. Marais, Journal et Mémoires, iv, 116n, 142n. Casanova reports the existence of another curious ménage in 1759: the duc d'Elbeuf, then aged 84, "prétend être devenu femme" and found it impossible to live with his mignon 'wife' (Histoire de ma vie, v, 254).
76. Ibid., 5 December 1777 and 11 September 1779.
77. Ibid., xii, 42, 15 July 1778.
78. Chroniques pittoresques et critiques de l’œil de Bœuf, viii, 154–5.
79. See J. Hervez (pseud. Raouël Vére), La Galanterie parisienne sous Louis XV et Louis XVI (Paris, 1910), 31ff., names the Duchesse de Villeroi, the Marquise de Terracènes, Mme de Futel and the Marquise de Luchet as prominent among the fashionable lesbians. See also Métra, Correspondance, iii, 212, 28 June 1783.
80. Montesquieu, L’Esprit des Lois, i, 203.
82. Marais, Journal et Mémoires, i, 278, June 1720.
83. Mercier, Tableau, x, 205–6.
84. Casanova, Histoire de ma vie, ii, chs 1–3. See also, on the travesti theme, Fauchery, La destinée féminine, 622 et seq. There was a minor interest too in grisly medical interventions which changed the sex of boys (see Nerciat, Monrose (1792), in L’Œuvre, 128 for an example). Nerciat also speculated on aspects of bi-sexuality which he regarded as a cruel trick played by the divinity—"un inutile prodige": "croyons que l'amour
amphibie qui convoite ces êtres équivoques, leur a partout élevé plus ou moins furieusement des autels, et que de la nécessité du désir de justifier des affection, un culte partout prescrit par les lois, est née la palliative chimère de l'hermaphrodisme" (ibid., 127). In a sense, we may observe here the beginnings of a scientia sexualis, to which Mirabeau made further contributions in the Erotika Biblion.

85 Restif, who was fond of quoting Deuteronomy 22, v. 5 ("The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man . . ."). was equally worried by trends in fashion: "La base de l'art de plaire par la parure, c'est de faire absolument trancher les deux sexes . . . . Rendez les deux parures égales, vous refroidirez les deux sexes l'un pour l'autre:—Les moeurs y gagneront (dira quelque Puriste)—Comme ils y gagnèrent chés les Grecs et les Romains . . . .", Les Contemporaines (42 vols, Paris, 1780–85), xii, 483–4.

86. The effects of which are also visible in the admiration commonly expressed for a cast of mind and a style of writing which combined feminine delicacy with masculine vigour. If reason and 'eloquence' were "male", they were most admirable when pressed in the service of a female sensibility. Beaumarchais prefaced La Mère Coupable (1790) with the remark that the play was written "dans une intention droite et pure: avec la tête froide d'un homme et le cœur brûlant d'une femme, comme on dit que J. -J. Rousseau écrivait. J'ai remarqué que cet ensemble, cet hermaphrodisme moral, est moins rare qu'on ne le croit".

87. Cf. M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol. i: An introduction (trans. Robert Hurley, London, 1978), 43: "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now (by the nineteenth century) a species."