

Romanticists, Flaubert sought to bury his own personality by striving for the goal of art in itself, and he devoted his entire life to the quest for its secrets. His ferocious will to be in his works "like God," everywhere and nowhere, explains the nerve-racking effort that went into each of his novels, in which nothing is left to the free flow of inspiration, nothing is asserted without being verified, nothing is described that has not been seen. This explains the multiple versions that are periodically uncovered of almost every one of his works, with the sole exception of *Madame Bovary* (1857), which led to his being tried for offending public decency. At the trial he won acquittal but was denied the costs of the proceedings. The novel gains its power from the careful picture of the Norman town and countryside he knew so well, while the lovers with whom Emma Bovary seeks to realize her dreams are as petty as the leaders of the provincial society in which she is trapped.

In 1857 he traveled to Tunisia to collect material for a historical novel set in Carthage after the First Punic War. *Salammô* (1862), abundantly documented, is so rich in sadistic scenes, including one of a mass child-sacrifice, that it horrified some contemporary readers. It was followed in 1869 by *L'éducation sentimentale*, which relates the life and the education in love of Frederic Moreau, and although an uneventful tale, perfectly captures a certain period and stratum of French society. In 1874 he published *La tentation de saint Antoine*, a prose poem of great power and imagination. His last work, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (issued posthumously in 1881), is an unfinished study in male bonding.

Flaubert had an interest in homosexuality that went beyond mere voyeurism. Among his mementoes was the autograph confession of a pederast who had killed his lover out of jealousy and was eventually guillotined after confessing every detail of his passion and crime. He was also delighted by the story of a group

of men surprised in a homosexual encounter in a *pissoir* in the Champs-Élysées, among them the son of a former Governor of the Bank of France. But it was in Cairo, in the winter of 1849–50, that Flaubert experienced homosexuality in its Oriental guise. A letter to Bouilhet mentions the *bardaches* (passive homosexuals): "Sodomy is a subject of conversation at table. You can deny it at times, but everyone starts ribbing you and you end up spilling the beans. Traveling for our own information and entrusted with a mission by the government, we regarded it as our duty to abandon ourselves to this manner of ejaculation. The occasion has not yet presented itself, but we are looking for one. The Turkish baths are where it is practiced. One rents the bath for 5 fr., including the masseurs, pipe, coffee, and linen, and takes one's urchin into one of the rooms.—You should know that all the bath attendants are *bardaches*." Then he relates his disappointment at not obtaining the masseur of his choice. In another letter he writes in Greek characters that "Maxime [Du Camp] tried to sodomize a *bardache* in Jeremiah's cave.—It's untrue!" Then he adds: "No! No! It's true." The experiences of the two travelers parallel in a way Sir Richard Burton's adventures while on government service in India; in the exotic setting they felt free to experiment with pleasures tabooed in their home countries. Although the major themes of Flaubert's work would always be heterosexual, it is interesting that he was not repelled by "the other love," but pursued it with nonchalance and with some evident curiosity.

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FLORENCE

This city in central Italy, the capital of Tuscany, is famous as the native or adoptive home of many of the chief

artistic and cultural figures of the Italian Renaissance, and for its art treasures.

Historical Background. Of Etruscan origins, it was a Roman town, but declined with the barbarian invasions until the Carolingian period (eighth century). An economic renewal took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, causing the city gradually to detach itself from its feudal overlords, while adding to its own territory. A merchant and manufacturing city-state, it underwent a complex political development, punctuated by internecine strife. The continuing turbulence gave the commercial Medici family the opportunity gradually to impose its domination (from 1434). Under Lorenzo de' Medici, known as "the Magnificent" (1448-1492) Florence reached the zenith of its artistic, cultural, and political development—though not in the economic realm, which had its apogee in the previous century.

After various conflicts—which saw the Medici twice expelled—the family prevailed in 1530, and in 1569 Pope Pius V named them grand-dukes of Tuscany, a title reflecting the extension of their rule over most of the province. The seventeenth and eighteenth were centuries of decline. Only with the reign of Peter Leopold of Habsburg-Lorraine (1765-1790) did Florence begin to recover culturally and economically.

Having revolted in 1859, in the following year Florence joined the new Kingdom of Italy, serving as capital from 1865 to 1871. Through the nineteenth and a large part of the twentieth century Florence was one of Italy's most important cultural centers, dense in literary, artistic, and publishing activities. Industrial development was centered in nearby Prato, permitting the historic center of Florence to be preserved.

Homosexuality in Repute and in Law. More than Venice, which has attracted many historians today, it was Florence that enjoyed the reputation, both in Italy and abroad, of being excessively "tolerant" of homosexual conduct. This

renown is attested by the Middle High German verb *florenzen*, "to sodomize." And St. Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444), preaching on May 23, 1425 against sodomy, lamented that "You cannot leave Tuscany without being reproached twelve times a day that here we never punish such a vice."

In reality Florentine laws (beginning with that of 1325) severely punished sodomy, but in practice the authorities imposed the death penalty reluctantly, preferring fines or corporal punishments of other types (including castration). Capital punishment, as far as present knowledge goes, was reserved for cases of special gravity, such as rape, seduction of a small child, or public scandal.

How much the death penalty was viewed as excessive by the Florentines can be seen in a proposal advanced in a pamphlet of 1496 of Domenico Cecchi (ca. 1445-after 1514), who says that to make *harsher* the penalty against sodomites one should amputate one testicle for each of the first two offenses; on the third occasion the culprit should be locked up in a madhouse.

Nonetheless, Florence had a special court, that of the Uffiziali di Notte (the "Officers of the Night"), which was charged with the task of monitoring and punishing homosexual acts. Exploration of the enormous quantity of material contained in the Florentine state archives has only just begun. Nonetheless, some of the documents of the Uffiziali di Notte have been studied by the American scholar Michael Rocke. This research shows that most of the penalties exacted were fines. The relative mildness of Florentine justice helped to assure the denunciation of notorious sodomites, since the accuser knew that he was unlikely to cause a person's death.

In this way one can see how in "tolerant" Florence the accusations amounted to several thousand. Thanks to this option of mild, but systematic repression (instead of severe, but sporadic), Florentine society succeeded in keeping homo-

sexual behavior under control, despite the existence of a popular culture that regarded it indulgently, especially if the culprits were adolescents. Among the names of famous persons accused of sodomy under this system were Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, and Benvenuto Cellini (who was twice condemned).

The Homosexual Subculture of the Renaissance. The existence of a real subculture, and not simply of isolated acts, is confirmed by numerous sermons preached by the above mentioned Bernardino of Siena in the years 1424–27. In these texts Bernardino mentions various privileged places where sodomites met, especially taverns and pastry shops, noting the hours of the night preferred by the sodomites, those “wild pigs,” in their search for sexual partners.

Niccolò Machiavelli, in a letter of February 25, 1514, to his friend Francesco Vettori, amused himself by recalling street by street the path of a common friend in nocturnal quest of a boy. Among the locales noted are Borgo Santo Apostolo, Calimala Francesca, and Il Tetto de' Pisani.

The prevailing pattern of this subculture is the same as that known for other Italian cities of the period: the sodomite couple consists of an adult, who takes the role of the insertor, and an adolescent, who is the insertee. The availability of adolescents for prostitution was decisive for maintaining the subculture; Rocke has calculated that in the period ca. 1478–83 ten percent of all Florentine boys had to appear before the authorities charged with sodomy. The same author notes also that those accused of sodomy included a conspicuous number of bachelors and recidivists, whom it is probably correct to describe as having a “deviant lifestyle.”

This phase of relative tolerance saw also the flowering of a notable amount of literature on the homosexual theme, authored by both homosexuals and heterosexuals, and written either in standard Italian or in Burchiellesque jargon. With Marsilio Ficino there was also an ideal-

ized, socially acceptable (though chaste) version of the love between two men.

Post-Renaissance Developments.

The period following the Renaissance, in which Florence fell into decline, has not yet been the object of special study. Certainly the Counter-Reformation and the definitive return to power of the Medici dynasty fostered an atmosphere of gloomy moralism and puritanism, which discouraged writing about homosexuality so that there is a “blackout” in the written records of almost two centuries.

Still, indirect light is shed on this period by biographical gossip concerning the last two rulers of the Medici house compiled by Luca Ombrosi in the eighteenth century and published under the title of *Vita dei Medici sodomiti*. Grand-Duke Gian Gastone (1671–1737) was a notorious homosexual and he died without issue, ending the Medici line. There is also the semiserious invective, *Della Vita e costumi de' fiorentini*, of Francesco Moneti (1635–1712), who accused his fellow citizens of being too much given to unnatural love. These texts document the persistence of widespread male prostitution and a degree of tolerance for homosexual conduct.

In the eighteenth century Ferdinando III, of the new ruling house of Habsburg-Lorraine, was one of the first European sovereigns to accept the Enlightenment ideas concerning the crime of sodomy; in 1795 he abolished the death penalty.

In the nineteenth century Florence became part of the grand tour of homosexual travelers from northern Europe, though it was less popular than such cities as Venice, Naples, and Rome. Still by the end of the century a small colony of foreign gay and lesbian residents, mainly English speaking, had formed. The persisting tolerance is shown by the indulgence always enjoyed by the noted Florentine versifier Tommaso Sgricci (1786–1836), of whom Byron remarked in 1820: “He is also a celebrated Sodomite, a character by no

means so much respected in Italy as it should be; but they laugh instead of burning, and the women talk of it as a pity in a man of talent."

In the twentieth century Florence saw a fervent cultural flowering, to which such homosexuals as the writers Carlo Emilio Gadda (1893–1973), Piero Santi (1912–), Aldo Palazzeschi (1885–1974), and the painter Ottone Rosai (1893–1957) contributed. The present scene in Florence is characterized by a special concentration of leather locales, which attract homosexuals from other northern Italian cities, as well as foreigners.

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FLOWER SYMBOLISM

In classical antiquity the theme of picking flowers represented enjoyment of life's transient pleasures, which must be gathered before they fade: the *carpe diem* motif. For many cultures the budding of plant life in spring represents nature's resplendent, but ever temporary self-renewal. Ancient pederasts wrote poignantly of the *anthos*, or "bloom" of the adolescent sex object destined to fade all too soon.

The idea that specific flowers have meanings, that there is a "language of flowers," seems to derive from Turkish eighteenth-century practice, when flowers served to make up a secret code for love messages in the harem. This concept of the *selam*, a flower code able to express a range of meanings, spread to western Europe, so that by 1820 Victor Hugo spoke of

"doux messages où l'amour parle avec des fleurs!" In 1884 Kate Greenaway summed up Victorian lore on the subject in her book *The Language of Flowers*. One dialect she did not present was the homosexual one, which was then known to a very small group. In 1894 Robert Hichens' novel, *The Green Carnation*, popularized that flower as the distinguishing mark of the aesthete, though the Wilde scandals in the following year led quickly to the abandonment of that particular badge. Of course flowers featured prominently in the interior-decoration schemes of the Arts and Crafts Movement and they were central to the fin-de-siècle imagery of the Art Nouveau in design and the minor arts.

The association of pansies with male homosexuals is documented in America as early as 1903. Dressing up in overelegant fashion may be called pansying up, while an effeminate boy may be called pansified. Other flowers that have been associated with male homosexuality are lilies and daffodils (the latter is jocular). The use of violets as a gift in Edouard Bourdet's play *The Captive*, a major event of the 1926 Broadway season, caused an association of this flower with lesbianism that lasted several decades.

The slang term for the act of several persons having sexual intercourse with each other simultaneously is a daisy chain. While such a gathering might be heterosexual, the usual interpretation is that of a male-homosexual orgy.

The reasons for the floral metaphor are various. Botanically, flowers have both male and female organs of reproduction. In the early nineteenth century the study of this phenomenon led to the creation of the term bisexuality, though it is doubtful whether this recognition had much direct impact on the popular imagination. Flowers assume complex shapes and colors as a means of passive sexual attraction, since they lure insects who will bear their pollen to their partners. Then too they often have a scent, something to which homosexuals are allegedly addicted.