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## CHAPTER 10

# *Parisian Homosexuals Create a Lifestyle, 1700–1750*

The Police Archives

(1985)

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*Owing to the paucity of documents and research, little is known about the practice of sex between men before the eighteenth century. The documents available, and even the use of the term “sodomy,” seem to suggest that for a long time, sodomy implied neither a particular lifestyle nor a self-recognized identity. Michel Rey’s essay proceeds by examining the reports dictated by agents provocateurs paid by a specialized office, and the reports and registers of officers charged with investigating claims to homosexual acts. These reports shed unusual light on intimate matters, as they are written by those spies (mouches) who insinuated themselves into others’ confidences so as to gain as much information as possible about their desires and acquaintances. A student of the historian of sexuality Jean-Louis Flandrin (whose work is cited by Foucault), Rey died of AIDS before completing an envisioned book-length project on the subject.* ♪

Because of a lack of documents and studies, the actual practice of a homosexual lifestyle before the eighteenth century is little known. Those insights that are available, and even the definition of sodomy (including homo- as well as heterosexual acts), seem to suggest that for a long time, sodomy implied neither a particular lifestyle nor inclusion in a clearly designated minority. Most often, moreover, an attraction

to boys did not preclude other tastes. In respect to this matter, however, the police archives of the eighteenth century indicate, at the heart of the Parisian population, a transformation that had perhaps begun earlier at court: male homosexuality becomes a taste that sets one apart from other men, being seen both as a refinement and a source of particular identity.

Police sources consist, for the most part, of reports dictated by agents provocateurs paid by a specialized office, and by officers charged with overseeing those royal gardens open to the public. These reports contain abundant and valuable details about the daily lives of those arrested, because the agents, appropriately called *mouches* (flies), encouraged those who approached them to give as much information as possible about their desires and acquaintances.<sup>1</sup>

### The Geography of “la Bonnaventure”

For hours on end, police observers were on the lookout for those cruising for a sex partner. It is actually possible, from these reports, to reconstruct cruising routes in Paris. Most of the sites frequented are mentioned from the beginning of the century, and it is difficult to discern precisely the evolution of popular rendezvous sites just from the fragmentary evidence of police interest in the sites. The boulevards laid out along the lines of the former fortifications that girdled Paris are mentioned with regularity only beginning in the 1730s, but they are cited as early as 1714 in a log recording those booked by the police at the prison hospital at Bicêtre.<sup>2</sup> Were there more homosexuals on those boulevards, or did the police simply send more staff to report them?

The use of meeting places was socially diversified. In principle, the archers allowed into the royal gardens only persons of quality, or at least those who dressed as such. The people arrested in the Tuileries, Luxembourg, or Palais-Royal gardens, or the Champs-Élysées, were thus mostly of the nobility or middle class, but included some master craftsmen, schoolboys, students, and household servants. These same groups frequented the streets, public squares, and river embankments; but there they could lose themselves in the mass of small shopkeepers, workers, and young tradesmen.

Like numerous heterosexual couples, or like prostitutes, homosexuals did not hesitate to engage in sexual relations in any places that were somewhat sheltered from view—and scarcely that at times—

behind ramparts, in thickets or ditches, in alleys. In any case, dwellings offered little more privacy: walls were thin and doors could be opened quickly.<sup>3</sup> Few people had the means or inclination to obtain real privacy. In fact, all busy places (such as the Pont-Neuf or the fair of St. Germain) attracted those in pursuit of *la bonnaventure*.

Those who found public places too exposed had recourse to a tavern:

Scouring the pathways, when he finds someone alone, he accosts him and asks him to go have a drink. He is always very careful to ask for a private room, anticipating the fulfillment of his infamous passion.

Caution had to be exercised with the proprietor and the waiters: “Since half of Paris was so inclined [homosexual], none of the innkeepers was unaware of the practice, and all were on their guard concerning such activities.”<sup>4</sup> However, one who knew his way around could find complicitous owners; so in 1749, when homosexual encounters were multiplying, the police arrested twelve “sellers of wine” for *pédérastie*.

Rendezvous sites were kept under surveillance almost daily, with, so far as surviving archives can substantiate, increased intensity in spring and summer, on Sundays and holidays, and at certain times of day: a certain Renard “did not fail to come to the Luxembourg gardens looking for a pickup [*pour y raccrocher*] from around ten in the morning until noon, and the same in the evening from seven to nine.”<sup>5</sup> Most people seemed to circulate between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., and from 8 to 10 p.m.

All these people had a singular perception of the city, directly related to the satisfaction of homosexual desires; but the majority of the places we have pointed out were equally well known for female prostitution, which the police readily equated with the homosexual solicitation (the term *raccrochage* was used for both cases), even when there was no payment for sex: in short, all types of errant sexuality were pursued alike by the police, who had scorn for men who offered their bodies to other men, or whom they saw as satisfying a law of supply and demand. To complicate the situation further, certain nobles did systematically offer money, thus reproducing in their homosexual lives the master–servant model on which the society was founded.<sup>6</sup> Some of those propositioned had the courage or self-esteem to decline: “He refused to take . . . [the hundred halfpennies (*sols*)] because he was not doing it out of interest, but only for his pleasure.”<sup>7</sup>

### Cruising: A Brief Discussion of Methods

Making a pickup was a trade (*métier*) whose techniques had to be mastered if one was to escape being considered a novice. In the eyes of certain practitioners, cruising distinguished homosexuals as a group similar to an important social configuration of the period: *la corporation*.

Methods of operation differed depending on sites, time of day, and conditions. During the day, at the Tuileries or the Luxembourg and in public walkways, the pickup was carried out mostly by dialogue: "He asked what time it was"; he walked up "while asking me for a pinch of tobacco."<sup>8</sup> The conversation might continue for some time, touching first on mere pleasantries, then slipping into the topic of pleasures in general, before broaching any more specific pleasurable possibility. On the river embankments, on the streets or walkways at nightfall, or in pissoirs, the approach could be more direct. Certain people called attention to themselves by protracted circulating "in places where the infamous ordinarily hung out." The police were familiar with the codes governing these encounters: "having come up to me, making all the signals to me which these infamous types are accustomed to, in order to speak to me," or "having approached me, staring me in the face several times," or staring "with affectation," or "having pissed . . . in front of me several times—being one of the signals that all these sordid types have at their disposal." One might indicate his interest and attempt to create excitement by showing his penis: "I'm sure you prefer that to a pinch of tobacco." The *mouche* himself sometimes elicited a conversation: "As I was about to let flow, [he] asked me what time it was according to my cock [*vit*] and said that according to his it was high noon."<sup>9</sup> On the quais, one could relieve oneself [*faire ses nécessités*] and "expose oneself from the front and rear." These gestures in themselves were not unusual: only the ostentation that accompanied them identified homosexuals, and they were quickly followed by a question—"Do you have an erection?"—and a rapid reach to find out.

Without exception, each time violence occurred during solicitation or sex, nobles, particularly those in military office, were the aggressors. In 1725, the Count de la Tournelle was arrested in the Tuileries gardens "while he was leaning against a tree with said individual, forcibly coercing him and tearing his breeches in order to fondle him in a shameful manner." In 1724, in the same location, three gentlemen were arrested under similar circumstances. One of them, a brigadier

general, “met an individual before whom he showed his penis outside his breeches, saying: “Let me fuck you” [*Attends que je te foute*]. The three now seized the person encountered around the waist, more or less gently, but without his being allowed to refuse the offer. This sort of force also reappears in the noblemen’s parties to which Deschauffours, a pimp [*proxénète*] and murderer burned in 1726, brought young boys who were given drinks before being molested.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, such sexual force rounds out the endless list of violent acts committed by the old, or military, nobility [*la noblesse d’épée*] against those whom they considered inferior.<sup>11</sup>

The police were not satisfied merely to observe pickup techniques with a scientific eye; officials claimed to have caused adaptations in them. In 1748, two homosexuals known to him by sight followed a police agent along a quai and “stepped into a recessed area, a sort of gateway, where they showed themselves without speaking, a practice that certain of these infamous types have adopted recently, especially those who have been summoned before the lieutenant general of the police.”<sup>12</sup> It was a wise precaution to find out whether one was or was not dealing with a police agent; one exposed oneself in the ordinary way (as though urinating, etc.) without ostentation. Then the *mouche* had to become involved in order to catch his victim “in the act.” The only other possibility was to make a report merely on suspicion. Thus, the police, just as much as their quarry, influenced the “disorderly conduct” they were after.

### Reactions and Hostility

Police sources provide some idea of opinion among ordinary citizens regarding homosexuals, for they present the reactions of those who had been approached unsuccessfully. In 1736, a man named P. Champ tried to “handle” a bather on the Pont-Neuf: “The young man pushed him away, trying to slap him, and saying, ‘You dog, have you washed your hands,’ and ‘Are your hands clean?’” In 1738, a young man went to urinate behind the palings of the Tuileries. A man (L. Chaumont) joined him, fondling himself in front of him. The young man “began to shout at him, calling him: ‘scoundrel.’” In a cabaret in 1748 a man named Tranchant had placed his hands inside the breeches of another. The man would not let him do it; he told people about the attempt, and Tranchant was publicly reproached in the neighborhood.<sup>13</sup> “Dog,”

“scoundrel”—these mild insults could as easily have been addressed to an unsavory drunkard. The texts show the importance of the neighborhood; with the possible exception of some districts at the center of the city, Paris was still arranged like a series of villages where everyone knew everyone, and where the community oversaw the conduct of each of its members: communication between sexual deviants and their neighbors had not yet been severed. The neighborhood rebuked them as men who had gone too far, who had done something “dirty.” They did not incur general hostility, but simply a silent reproach or a physical action such as might have repelled an intruder. In addition, such a deviant was perhaps viewed as not totally devoted to his passion, and therefore not “different,” unlike the mason who, in 1723, was turned in to the police by a neighbor. He had a “bad reputation, having always in his company young men of the neighborhood whom he would lure to his home.”<sup>14</sup> He had made the mistake of not considering the neighborhood. Not having hidden his activities discreetly enough, he was resented as a menace to public order who continued to seek his partners inside the delineated and watchful community.

It should be noted that in most such instances the police were not summoned. Faced with what it considered unacceptable behavior (and the same held for physical aggression or theft), to enforce good conduct the community used traditional instruments: neighborhood, parish, family, and professional scorn. Thus, in 1723, a man named F. Solle recounted how, in a tavern, he “had been caught by a waiter, who found them with their pants off and told his mistress, who in turn created an outcry.”<sup>15</sup> Calling public attention to an act, singling out a black sheep, tarnishing a man’s honor, branding him with infamy was apparently sufficient to preserve order in the community.

In 1737, four young men crossing the Pont-Neuf discussed in loud voices their previous evening and their past adventures: “They talked so loudly among themselves about their infamies that other people in the street admonished them for it.”<sup>16</sup> Street life, at that period, allowed for such exchanges. Passersby, not content with silent disapproval, willingly intervened in order to preserve respect for dignity and order. The later evolution of refined social decorum, the spread of the notion of private life, and the formation of a milieu reserved exclusively for sodomites all gradually established boundaries between homosexuals and the public’s jurisdiction; and in the second half of the century sys-

tematic recourse to the district police commissioner appears to have become pervasive.<sup>17</sup>

### Manifestations of Sexual Desire and Love

Trying to arouse a potential partner and determine whether he would be suitable, those who cruised among the *mouches* often expressed their desires; but their words present analytical problems as we attempt to discover how the eighteenth century made love. If sexual practices seem finite in number, the fantasies and taboos connected with them may seem infinite. But even now we have very few studies that allow for comparisons: how did people make love in the eighteenth century?

For certain years where files are numerous, it is possible to calculate the number and kind of homosexual propositions. For example:

ACTIVITY	1723	1724
active sodomy	11	24
passive sodomy	0	5
active or passive sodomy	9	20
fellatio	2	8
kissing	2	7

This limited list authorizes several observations. Two major categories stand out: active sodomy and sodomy that is active or passive without preference; by contrast, exclusively passive sodomy appears infrequently. What accounts for this imbalance of preference? If it was particularly degrading to be sodomized, one would seldom have expressed this desire; or else one would have done so while simultaneously expressing interest in sodomizing. The shame of passivity might have been founded on a rigid notion of the male and female sexual roles. Is a man who screws another really “infamous”? Those who declared themselves exclusively active might have thought not. The marked effeminacy of the *assemblées* of homosexuals seems to confirm this, as do remarks made in 1738 by a male servant who wished to leave his master because the latter wanted to sleep with him although he had no money to pay for it. The servant, who fears being regarded as an *infâme*, speaks continually of his master in feminine terms, as “she,” and speaks of him as a lewd woman.<sup>18</sup> At this time,

those in whose interest it was to be seen as quite distinct from a sodomite depicted him as a man with an effeminate nature. In 1723, a servant out of work and married for three months, conversed as follows with a police agent in the Tuileries: "I asked him if he would allow me to screw him. He answered that he hadn't done that yet, but that he had screwed someone else occasionally, and that usually he only masturbated."<sup>19</sup> Other remarks indicate that though masturbation between men did not seem to present significant moral problems, nor did the fact of sodomizing someone, it was much more difficult to accept being sodomized.

This list of activities leads us to another observation: the infrequent mention of oral practices, which today appear common, even predominant. The kiss is perhaps mentioned only infrequently because it was so commonplace, though this is not at all certain. Kissing is a very old act in the West; however, it is even now not a universal erotic act, not being so in much of Asia, for instance. If we compare male sexuality of the eighteenth century with that of other societies, for example, those of North Africa, we realize that there also sexual relations between men are rather frequent, with a clear distinction being made between active and passive roles, which hinders expressions of tenderness.

If the principal taboos in contemporary Western societies seem to concern anal eroticism (as in *Last Tango in Paris*), this has not always been the case. In his study of Roman sexuality, Paul Veyne indicates that the ultimate abasement for Romans was fellatio; and in a study on homosexuality in court circles in the eighteenth century, Benoît Lapouge is also amazed at the apparent absence of the mouth as an erogenous zone.<sup>20</sup> For the eighteenth century, oral homosexual acts appear to have been seen as depraved or very wanton—in any case, extreme. In 1738, a hustler, S. Fontaine, "says that he did it in all ways, *even that* if I wanted, I could consummate the act in his mouth." In 1748, J. Favé, a baker, was in love with an unresponsive water carrier, "which angered the witness all the more, since he desperately loved the said Vendreville, many times having kissed his genitals and even his anus."<sup>21</sup> In 1735, a hustler discriminated among the locations of homosexual acts: "I perform the act with my mouth, in the same way as with my ass when I see that a man is clean and doesn't smell of women." Similar expressions of disgust for stinking [*puant*] female genitals, which were thought to cause venereal diseases more difficult to cure than those transmitted by men, are numerous: "He said that he hated women so strongly that he thought he saw the Devil whenever



he saw them, and that if a married man touched him, he would just as soon have the plague.”

In both 1723 and 1737–38, married men constituted one-third of those arrested. They often hid their status while soliciting, however, either from fear of blackmail or of putting off their partner. Married couples did not, perhaps, lead such a self-contained emotional life as today, though marriage assured respectability. Gallimard, a lawyer in the Parlement de Paris, separated from his wife, declared in 1724 “that he had a wife but hardly ever made use of her, that his marriage was a strategem, cover-up, and that he had no taste for women, that he preferred an ass to a cunt.”<sup>22</sup> As the research by Jean-Louis Flandrin and Philippe Ariès, among others, shows, marriage and love were not commonly associated at that time.<sup>23</sup> All the passions, including love in various forms, were indulged in outside of the marriage bonds. Gallimard encountered a *mouche* on the Crescent in front of the Bastille and later testified “that he wanted very much to get to know me, and that we would live together, that he would pay for half of the room, that we would live together like two brothers, that we would drink and eat together.”

The lifestyle proposed here is very standard: it is that of a companion, almost a brother, with whom one shares bread and daily life. It is an old, typically male arrangement. In 1725, a lackey related to a priest “that he had always encountered much difficulty in finding a friend with a good disposition, with whom he could have established a pleasurable relationship which might last.”<sup>24</sup> The image of the couple is twofold here: a pair of friends whose temperaments agree, with all the communication and sharing that this traditionally includes, and a “pleasurable relationship.” The expression is ambiguous; it evokes rather more a relationship with a lover. At any rate, the emphasis on *duration, always present in friendship, but associated here with the “liaison de plaisir,”* suggests what we today call “conjugal love”; and we know that until the end of the eighteenth century the relationship between spouses was commonly called “friendship.”

A last example (1724)—but they are not very numerous in these reports, which, by their nature, record for the most part relationships of an ephemeral sort—documents the end of a relationship more lasting than a “*liaison de plaisir*”:

he had lived for six months with Abbé Candor, at that time the parish priest of Faverolles, in the diocese of Soissons . . . he passed

himself off in the area as the man's cousin . . . they had amused themselves in every respect, and . . . he had only left this priest because he was too jealous, and because he loved a man as a lover loves his mistress.<sup>25</sup>

It would be unfortunate to conclude this section without pointing out the single gesture of tenderness that these police documents report. In 1748, a man spoke in the following manner about two lackeys whom he knew: "Duquesnel and Dumaine had been sleeping together for two years. They were unable to fall asleep without having mutually touched each other and without having performed infamous acts. It was even almost always necessary for Duquesnel to have his arm extended along the headboard, under Dumaine's head. Without that Dumaine could not rest."<sup>26</sup>

### Congregations of Homosexuals

In 1706, the police officer who regularly inspected the general hospital of Bicêtre noted the presence of inmates who had congregated "in taverns in the St. Antoine district, where they committed the most foul abominations. In these groups Langlois was nicknamed the Grand Master; and Bertauld, the Mother in charge of novices."<sup>27</sup> The same essential characteristics of these meetings reappeared in the middle of the century: they most often took place in a tavern in a populous district, and the participants altered their identity by adopting surnames. These associations show a closing in of the group by imitating the court, a convent, or a secret society, and consequently affirm the necessity of an initiation in order to be admitted.

According to the reports, which are incomplete, this type of gathering appeared to increase beginning in the 1730s. In 1748, one can count no fewer than eight taverns where groups of fifteen to thirty people gathered. The gatherings took place in the evening, with the shutters closed. The participants ate, danced, sang, seduced; they exchanged information, smutty stories, and obscene suggestions; but in several cases it is mentioned that they "did not commit the act on the premises," but on the road home after having paired up. Thus, in 1748, a man who tried to fondle a violin player was reproached by the assembly for his boldness.<sup>28</sup> The group established rules of civility. Other assemblies, more private and more sexual, are at times difficult to distinguish from—in the language of police ambiguity—"houses

of disorder full of reprobates” [*des bordels d’infâmes*], though most often the meeting place had two rooms, one for socializing and one for sexual activities.

In the same year, 1748, several witnesses gave an account of a gathering held in a Parisian suburb, La Courtille, in the Fer à Cheval, a tavern, where a group was called “the locksmith’s marriage” because they forcibly seduced initiates to perform infamous acts [*faire des infamies*] for the first time. Again in 1748, another witness described a similar ceremony: “This past summer, he found himself in several gatherings of people from La Manchette, either in La Courtille or at the sign of the *Six Sparrows* in the rue aux Juifs (in the central Marais district). In these assemblies, the conversation is almost always in the same vein. Some members with napkins on their heads imitate women and mince about like them. Any new young man in their midst is called the bride [*mariée*], and they all try for him. People pair off in order to touch and to perform infamous acts. Sometimes that also takes place after leaving the tavern.”<sup>29</sup> In the marriage described here, the initiate [*novice*] is admitted into a family circle; however, he is not joined to one man but to a group who caress him in order to include him in it.

In 1735, J. Baron, a brewer, organized a dinner at his tavern: “The others approached us, embracing us and saying: Hello *Mesdames*. Baron arranged his hair with a woman’s headdress that was black, like the hairdo of women at court. He placed pompoms in everyone’s hair.”<sup>30</sup> The word *Mesdames*, reserved at this time for women of status [*femmes de condition*], like the allusion to court styles, shows that within this group femininity, refinement, and aristocracy were closely linked to the drama of homosexual intrigue. This intermingling of terms reappears in the use of certain nicknames: *Madame de Nemours*, *Duchesse Duras*, *Baronne aux Épingles*.<sup>31</sup>

Here follows the social-class distribution of those arrested, during four years when documents are numerous:

	1723	1737–38	1749
nobility and gentry	8	17	28
craftsmen and merchants	20	63	129
servants	12	59	58
unknown	4	7	19
<b>totals</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>234</b>

There is a proportional consistency in the distribution: and on the average, 14 percent were people of status; 48 percent were minor craftsmen and merchants; 26 percent were servants. When arrested, many people of uncertain social position declared themselves servants in order to avoid being classified with the lowly poor. However, these figures are only suggestive, as they are not complete.

According to testimony, the craftsmen/merchant group predominated in the assemblies, but it is not surprising that few nobles and important members of the middle class [*grands bourgeois*] were present, as they were moving in other social orbits. More surprising is the near absence of servants and persons of no social status, wretched immigrants from the provinces, beggars, and occasional prostitutes. The organized prostitution networks did not include the assemblies and catered more to the nobility or specific groups like the military. The assembly thus seems to have been a rather coherent social group of small merchants and tradesmen, which fantasized about the freedom of manners and the festivities of the court—as if, in order to fashion a transgressing identity and to become organized, some social demarcation was necessary.

The effeminacy and the politeness associated with these assemblies appear to extend into the streets in the course of the century. Certain members wore rouge and powder, colored ribbons, curtsied in a feminine manner, and greeted one another as “Madame.” Thus, in 1737 a *mouche* was asked “whether there were any good-lookers in the Luxembourg gardens.” The obvious consciousness of belonging to a group is also attested to by the use of certain expressions: “There’s somebody who looks like one. Let’s split up and see what this sister is all about. That is an infamous term.” When a boy did not seem to respond to advances, “they said to each other: Let’s let him go, he doesn’t understand Latin.” In 1749, a master sculptor attended a gathering where he was asked if he would like to be a freemason. The characteristics of these assemblies caused certain people to shy away: though willing “to perform the act,” they would not talk about it, and they rejected effeminacy. In 1748, a painter stated that “he withdrew from these gatherings because they were too scandalous. Several members imitated women and made gestures that showed what they were.” He said he often replied to them, saying: “Can’t you adopt men’s mannerisms rather than women’s?” The same year, a hardware merchant, J. B. Thomas, stated that he was angry at having gone to

these assemblies at La Courtille “because he didn’t enjoy the company at all and because among those present were some who made propositions that were too licentious.” In 1749, during a party of seven, where his acquaintances called him their aunt and assigned each other female first names, a secondhand clothing dealer exclaimed: “What! You are men and yet give each other women’s names!”<sup>32</sup> These indignant participants seem to have been attracted momentarily by the warmth, relative security, and opportunities for enjoying themselves that these small groups offered; but they were unable to assume a public female role, which seems to have been the characteristic identity defined by these homosexual assemblies. They preferred to retreat to men who were more secretive and those who, from need, occasionally sold themselves in the shadowy anonymity of the usual pickup spots.

### Distinctions

During the same years, several educated people (such as a medical student and a priest) distinguished between “those who think along those lines” and “those who think differently” on the basis of tolerated and tolerant attitudes. Seen as a tolerated difference, homosexual desire was no longer merely a forbidden “passion,” a sin whose very mention constituted a crime: it was felt to be a mode of thought. In the 1730s, police texts reflect these changes, by replacing the word “sodomite” by “*pédéraste*.” The first term is biblical and refers to divine prohibition of a sin, whereas the second more neutral term, which dates from the sixteenth century (and is not used here in its etymological sense signifying love of boys), refers to the ancient Greek ethos and designates here a man whose sexual desire is oriented exclusively toward other men. Does the change of wording in the police language indicate a greater acceptance of homosexuals and their subculture; or is the linguistic change insignificant? Similarly, what interpretation, if any, is to be made of the fact that beginning in the 1740s the police reports used another expression, which was to remain in use at least until the French Revolution: “*les gens de la Manchette*” or “*les chevaliers de la Manchette*,” a reference to the aristocracy parallel, say, to the Knights of the Garter in England?

An answer to this question is suggested by the reports of the pederasty patrols [*patrouilles de pédérastie*] that circulated around suspected places during the second half of the century. On October 1,

1781, the inspector “charged with dealing with the pederasts” arrested on the streets “a peculiar individual whom the mob was chasing because of his indecent and characteristic dress [*costume*] . . . If ever an outfit, in every respect, was cause for suspecting an individual of pederasty, said Prainquet had assembled it all and the public judged him by it.” Arrested again in the same outfit on October 15 at La Grève and “jeered at and hounded by the people,” and arrested a third time on October 20, he was finally locked up in the Petit-Châtelet for “obstinacy in dressing in an indecent manner, which is used only by the most dissolute pederasts.” Although only seventeen and merely a cook’s helper in the service of an army commissariat officer, he wore a dressing gown or frock coat, a cravat, a knot of hair at the back of his head, and a hat. What was indecent? What made the crowd recognize a pederast? Later, on December 1, the inspector arrested an unemployed nineteen-year-old on the street, “dressed in the most suspicious manner,” that is, “dressed in a very long brown coat, with rosettes on his shoes, round hat, knotted hair, wide tie, and short hair around his ears . . . Asked why he was dressed that way . . . [he] answered that his attire was nothing extraordinary, since all people of distinction dressed similarly in the morning.”<sup>33</sup> These two young men sported sartorial refinement above their station, whereas for society in general and the police in particular the class hierarchy that delineated an entire social hierarchy had to be clearly visible, and was most obvious in clothing. But that is not sufficient to explain why they were immediately recognizable as homosexual. Two hypotheses, one linked to the other, are possible. First, to people of the lower class, a noble—powdered, pomaded, refined—was both elegant and effeminate; but that bothered no one so long as the mode of attire remained faithful to the specific superior social condition that its wearer represented. If someone lower on the social scale assumed this costume (and it should be asked whether the young age of the two men were not a factor), not only did he betray his social condition, but in addition, his effeminacy, by losing its accepted association with elegance and the upper class, became an indication of the wearer’s real effeminacy. The crowd, the police, and the homosexuals themselves all linked aristocratic refinement with effeminacy; and the wish to stand out by imitating the aristocracy must have been very powerful, judging from the perseverance of these young men despite the risks they ran.

During the entire eighteenth century, homosexual men tried to

group on the basis of an exclusive and minority sexual desire—a phenomenon not exclusively French. Studies concerning England and Holland during this period arrive at similar conclusions.<sup>34</sup> Parallel with the image of the libertine lord who enjoyed sensual excesses, members of the lower classes created an identity involving a double deception: in gender (and thus in virility) and in social status. The adoption of an effeminate aristocratic mode of refinement was a social sin viewed more and more as the century wore on as an unnatural “passion” or “taste” that immutably characterized certain people. The report of 1765 (the only one in the archives consulted) speaks of the “crime against nature” [*crime anti-physique*]. At the end of the century, Sade’s third dialogue of *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* links homosexuals’ desires to their physical makeup and to a congenital *caractère* that caused typically feminine traits: “Is it not clear that this is a class of men different from the other, but also created by nature . . . ?” Sade is very close to the forensic pathologists of the nineteenth century who would look for distinguishing stigmata of homosexuality (and all criminal types) on individuals’ bodies. He is not very far, in his defense by natural cause, from the idea of a “third sex” and from the psychologists’ creation of a category of genetic abnormality, which at the end of the nineteenth century would lead to the mutually exclusive categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality.

Translated by Robert A. Day and Robert Welch

#### NOTES

1. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Archives de la Bastille, MSS 10.254 to 10.260.
2. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Clairambault 985.
3. See Arlette Farge, *Vivre dans la rue à Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), and Daniel Roche, *Le Peuple de Paris* (Paris: Aubier, 1981).
4. MS 10.254, P. Deu, October 31, 1723, and F. Solle, July 15, 1723. MS 10.255, abbé de Boisrenard, February 10, 1724.
5. MS 10.254, T. Ranard, August 23, 1723.
6. See Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982), chapter 2, “The Social Setting.”
7. MS 10.255, S. Guillard, April 26, 1724.
8. MS 10.254, J. Fourty, August 30, 1723, and C. Delamotte, July 11, 1723.
9. MS 10.254, L. Gouffier, May 3, 1723, and marquis de Bressy, April 15, 1723.
10. Paris, Bib. Nat., MS Fond Français 10970.

11. See, in particular, Nicole Castan and Yves Castan, *Vivre Ensemble: Ordre et désordre en Languedoc (XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).
12. MS 10.259, Veglay, June 25, 1748.
13. MS 10.258, P. Champ, May 10, 1736, and L. Chaumont, 1738; MS 10.259, Tranchant, October 1748.
14. MS 10.254, L. Gobert, October 21, 1723.
15. MS 10.254, F. Solle, July 15, 1723.
16. MS 10.258, Brunet, Bourbonnais, Dijon, and Courtois, September 22, 1737.
17. See, in particular, Alexandre Mericksay, "Le Châtelet et la répression de la crimialité à Paris en 1750," typed thesis, Paris IV—Sorbonne (1984).
18. MS 10.258, Leveillé, May 26, 1738.
19. MS 10.254, J. Berlet, April 10, 1723.
20. Paul Veyne, "La Famille et l'amour sous le Haut-Empire Romain," *Annales E.S.C.* 1 (1978): 35–63, and "L'Homosexualité à Rome," *L'Histoire* 30 (1981): 76–78; and Benoît Lapouge, "Les comportements sexuels déviant à Paris au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Mémoire de Maîtrise*, typed, Paris-Sorbonne.
21. MS 10.258, S. Fontaine, 1738; MS 10.259, J. Favé, November 1748.
22. MS 10.257, P. Lemoine, October 26, 1735; MS 10.256, C. Galard, July 22, 1725; MS 10.255, F. Gallimard, October 3, 1724.
23. Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Familles, parenté, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne société* (Paris: Hachette, 1976, and Éditions du Seuil, 1984), and "Amour et mariage au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Le Sexe et l'Occident: Évolution des attitudes et des comportements* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981), 83–96; Philippe Ariès, "L'amour dans le mariage," in *Sexualités occidentales*, *Communications*, no. 35 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982), 116–22.
24. MS 10.256, J. Damien, January 3, 1725.
25. MS 10.255, F. N. Gromat, June 11, 1724.
26. MS 10.259, Charpentier, November 1748.
27. *Bib. Nat.*, "Extraits d'interrogatoires faits par la police de Paris de gens vivants dans le désordre, et de mauvaises mœurs, renfermés au château de Bicêtre": no. 81, S. Langlois.
28. MS 10.259, Caron, January 23, 1748.
29. MS 10.259, Pinson, January 1748.
30. MS 10.257, J. Baron, October 25, 1735.
31. MS 10.258, A. Guy, February 12, 1737; MS 10.258, M. Lalonde, June 7, 1736; MS 10.259, Ferret, May 1748, and Feuillon, April 1749, MS 10.260.
32. MS 10.259, Marandel, February 1748, and J. B. Thomas, March 1748; MS 10.260, J. Boudin, January 1749.
33. Paris, Archives Nationales, Y 13408. J. Prainguet, October 11 and 20, 1781, and L. Dufresnoy, December 1, 1781.
34. Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*; Randolph Trumbach, "London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 11 (1977): 1–33; L. J. Boon, "Those Damned Sodomites: Public Images of Sodomy in the Eighteenth Century Netherlands," in *Among Men, Among Women: Sociological and Historical Recognition of Homosexual Arrangements*, text for the international conference of this title, University of Amsterdam, June 22–26, 1983.