

Homosexuality in Early Modern France: A Documentary Collection. Edited by JEFFREY MERRICK and BRYANT T. RAGAN JR. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. xvi + 256. \$29.95 (paper).

This volume was assembled “to illustrate the variety of materials that exists . . . and to enable scholars, students, and lay readers to evaluate samples of such materials for themselves” (p. ix). For each of these audiences, this volume has much to recommend it. Four sections, entitled “Traditions,” “Repression,” “Representation,” and “Revolution,” include a range of documents organized chronologically within subtopics designed for each of the potential audiences. The main sections include a brief historiography, but the editors have chosen to leave many of the controversies largely unspoken, allowing the documents to tell the proverbial story. In part a pragmatic choice (more documents can be included if less attention is devoted to explication and historical apparatus), this is also a daring and generally successful pedagogical strategy. The organization favors encouraging engagement with the texts over textbook-style illustrative documents of a narrative, and the pedagogical advantage seems worth the risk. For scholars, Merrick and Ragan have selected a number of more obscure texts that invite reassessment of questions about notions of sexuality and comparisons with other national traditions. Scholars may be slightly frustrated by the absence of a bibliography, no doubt a result of the economics of academic book publishing; however, Merrick and Ragan have ameliorated the problem by providing a Web link address with an up-to-date bibliography. As for lay readers, while at some points an inattentive or unsympathetic reader might have difficulty situating the texts, the underlying assumption is that most readers come to the material willing to explore notions of homosexuality and homosexual practices in the past, and accommodating seems not to be a part of the agenda.

Merrick and Ragan begin with “Traditions,” a collection of theological, legal, and medical texts about “sodomy” that collectively reveal how and why anxiety about sodomy grafted primarily onto men. While the term referred to a variety of nonprocreative sexual acts, male homosexual sodomy was seen as disruptive of unspoken social and cultural norms about male privilege in a patriarchal society. Even to those familiar with the centrality of religion in early modern legal and social structures, the degree to which the theological and legal traditions overlap in formulating cultural unease with male sodomy is striking. Whether this overlap is situational and only seems chronic by dint of repetition is not entirely clear. For instance, Jean Benedicti’s derogatory comments on Theodore Beza as a sexual deviant are clearly a strategy in the sectarian conflicts of the Wars of Religion, during which sexual slander was utilized routinely as a political weapon against adversaries of different religious convictions. But did that

context then facilitate routine condemnations of sodomy in religious terms throughout the duration of the Old Regime? That the editors chose not to highlight how texts may be responses to particular contexts seems to be an invitation to students and scholars to explore such questions, but it is perhaps a bit burdensome for the lay reader.

On the other hand, the collection enables all readers to trace the utilization of exemplary evidence across a broad expanse of time. The transformation of a piece of information, such as St. Louis's condemnation of "buggers," from an unexamined truism to a piece of evidence utilized by Enlightenment philosophes to attack uncritical acceptance of historical truisms is a case in point. Similarly, earlier texts in the medical literature (1599 and 1612) are saturated with the language of deviant women as imperfect men, while the later ones (1690, 1760, and 1771) deal with women as a different sex with properly female sexual functions. The texts collectively illustrate Thomas Laqueur's idea, in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), that the dominant paradigm moved from a notion of one sex (male) to the understanding of men and women as two distinct sexes.

If the selection of documents provides support for ideas like Laqueur's with respect to transformations in European modes of thought, it also illustrates, often vividly, how early modern life was experienced. Despite legal traditions that favored capital punishment, death sentences were all but reserved for the poor and poorly connected. While most of the more humble men were imprisoned rather than executed, aristocratic sodomites, if detained at all, were typically released with a warning. Women, never as free to travel about the city as men because of concerns about female chastity, were almost invisible to authorities and thus remain so to modern eyes. The few women who appear in the records do so because they were notorious enough to have annoyed their neighbors and offended "decency" (pp. 37–39). The intersection of sexual behavior with other sorts of societal power is illustrated by such examples as the privileges of elites and the assumptions about gender that marked Old Regime society.

Like most systems of power, the one in which early modern homosexuality was embedded was far less monolithic in practice than it might appear to the casual observer. As the extensive reports from police spies indicate, the male homosexual was generally a problem because of the public quality of his activities. Public gardens, arcades, and other locations where men were known to seek other men for sex were frequently patrolled (pp. 59–77). The combination of the existence of generally known locations and the repetitive language and patterns of behavior in arrest records indicates that some subculture was extant, at least by the eighteenth century, but it was different in France than in other parts of Europe. Records for early modern London include far more extensive references to ceremonies of

initiation and mock rituals at taverns and inns where sodomites liked to gather. This was more limited in Paris, and the pattern of initiating young men into society through sexual relationships with older men that Michael Rocke has identified in Florence seems to have been virtually nonexistent. Homosexuality in early modern France was shaped by the political imperatives of absolute monarchy, and despite the efforts of officialdom to quash it, homosexuality found a way.

In part, official repression was unlikely to succeed because homosexuality was evidently a chronic topic of conversation. Neatly illustrating the Foucauldian premise that repression incites discourse, the section “Representations” includes a range of texts from gossip to earnest, if limited, efforts by some philosophes to rethink the status of homosexuality as a crime. Many of the texts express persistent anxieties over homosexuality, such as the efforts to assign origins for homosexual behavior outside of France. Blame tended to fall on the Italians, both in routine polemics and when taking aim at individuals of Italian descent like Cardinal Jules Mazarin (pp. 97–98, 108–10). Anxieties over lesbianism as a rejection of men saturate pornographic texts that reinscribe female sexuality in service of male desire. Texts like Nicolas Chorier’s *The Academy of Women* (1680) provide a sense of how female homosexuality was seen as libidinally inspiring for men but also suggest how unsettling women without men were to patriarchal culture (pp. 110–17). If the aggressive sexuality of the tribade threatened patriarchal order, so did the effeminate sodomite, as indicated by reports on Henri III and Louis XIV’s brother (pp. 98–101, 124–26).

While for the most part well chosen and lively, some of the selections could use more of an explanatory apparatus. Texts like *Anecdotes to Be Used in the Secret History of the Ebugors* (1733) require a great deal of deciphering, and the end notes are not entirely helpful. More satisfying is the selection of Enlightenment texts that grapple with the problem of sodomy when the traditional religious justification for its criminal status came under fire. The ways that the texts illustrate how difficult the category of “nature” was for the philosophes would be helpful in any course dealing with the Enlightenment, and the editors have captured both the promise and the complications of Enlightenment thinking with respect to the relationship between “nature” and sexuality.

The texts in the “Revolution” section continue in this vein of rendering the complexity of seminal events. Virtually all studies of early modern France end with the Revolution, which necessarily dampens any emphasis on continuity. Merrick and Ragan have managed to foreground both the crucial development of the Revolution—the decriminalization of sodomy—and the continuities in the treatment of sodomites during the Revolutionary period. The reader is invited to ponder the larger implications of how the Revolution, for sexual “deviants,” accords more with the experience of the poor and of women in the Revolution, for whom the event was far less momentously progressive than many of its advocates would like to

believe. In the end, tradition and repression come together in the representational forms (some new and some old) of the Revolution. Merrick and Ragan lay out a rich and complex picture of the Revolution that is, of course, not really an end at all.

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Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century. By JEFFREY P. MORAN. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. Pp. 304. \$27.95 (cloth).

In *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century*, Jeffrey Moran offers a well-researched, concise, and clearly written account of the American struggle to develop policies to teach sex and sexuality, combat sexual diseases, and reform sexual deviancy while at the same time transmitting responsible family values to future generations. Historically, this struggle between religious moralists and secular social service professionals has played itself out as a battle to control the sexual morals and behaviors of the nation's youth. Like the resolution of many other important social issues, as Moran's story illuminates, what evolved was a one-size-fits-all, "sex-less" educational curriculum designed to please everyone. In the end this particular labor to control the nation's youth produced a compromised "Instrumentalist Approach" that allowed educators—without teaching sex—to warn school-age children about the evils of premarital sex and sexual diseases in the context of responsible family values. Since the topic is far from resolved in modern American politics, Moran's story provides an historical framework for this particular struggle for the American soul.

In eight chapters, Moran explicates the cyclic struggle of sex education proponents, disease-training advocates, and family-life educators to define American adolescence and establish a national sex education policy. Chapter 1, "The Invention of the Sexual Adolescent," begins in 1904 with Clark University psychologist G. Stanley Hall's attempt to research and define adolescence. Hall's Victorian beliefs (he personally referred to genitals as the "dirty place") combined with a progressive ideology to set the stage for numerous attempts to reform young men's insistent sexual urges, protect virtuous women, and allow people to understand the role of sexuality in character development. At the same time, the problem of adolescent sexuality was exacerbated by a changing American landscape, characterized by overcrowded cities, culturally diverse immigrants, crime, and disease, that provided illicit temptations to young people, who were pushed into co-educational public schools just when the age of puberty was declining and many young people were delaying marriage. As a Social Darwinist, Hall