

with its numerous autonomous institutions (communications centers, journals, publishing houses, sports and choral societies, religious, political and trade union groups, a gay member of the city council, and so forth) is comparable to other Western metropolitan areas, in East Berlin the corresponding development has proceeded much more slowly because of the obstacles imposed by the Communist government in that part of Germany.

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Manfred Herzer

### BERNESQUE POETRY

This type of Italian poetry may be regarded as an outgrowth of burchiellesque poetry; it also continues the tradition of obscene carnival songs (*canti carnascialeschi*). The genre takes its name from Francesco Berni (1496/8-1535), the best known of the poets who were engaged in softening the original obscurity of the burchiellesque trend so as to make it more accessible—while retaining the essentials of its coded language.

Bernesque poetry relies on double meanings—which are often deployed in a masterful way—characteristically incarnated in food items (round ones such as apples symbolize buttocks, phallic ones such as eels stand for the penis) or objects of daily use (the chamber pot represents the anus; the needle symbolizes the penis).

While the Bernesque poet gave the appearance of choosing everyday objects so as to produce comic effects by

heaping excessive praise on trivial things, in reality he constructed a subtle net of double meanings in order to exalt sexual relations.

Unlike the burchiellesque poets, however, who often delighted in cobbling together tangles of words that seemed to lack any coherent meaning, the Bernesque poets always made compositions that were fully meaningful, in a colloquial, humorous, and (at first sight) simple tone. This aspect permits the reader to enjoy their works as humor, even if he misses the double meanings.

In the Bernesque genre, homosexual themes (generally having to do with anal contacts) often occur. The poets sometimes took great pains to compose seemingly innocuous poems for boys (such as Berni's directed to "young abbés" of the Cornari family), which when decoded reveal highly obscene senses.

Berni also wrote serious love poems in Latin, which were fairly explicit, in praise of boys. A priest, he was shut up for a year and a half in an Abruzzi monastery for a homosexual scandal, the full details of which are not known (1523-24). Moreover, some private letters have survived containing innocent requests to friends, but which read with the code of burchiellesque language reveal requests for the sending of boys (examples are those to Vincilao Boiano of May-August 1530).

Many authors wrote Bernesque poetry with homosexual themes. Among them are Angelo Firenzuola (1493-1543), Andrea Lori (sixteenth century), Matteo Franzesi (sixteenth century), Giovanni Della Casa (1503-1556), Benedetto Varchi (1503-1565), Lodovico Dolce (1508-1568; he also wrote a long work "For a Boy"), and Antonio Grazzini, known as "Il Lasca" (1503-1584).

With the Counterreformation, and the more repressive climate that came to prevail in Italy as a consequence, practitioners of the Bernesque genre found it prudent to abandon erotic double entendres, and the mode gradually ebbed,

coming down to a series of rhetorical exercises on harmless subjects, such as the death of a cat, baldness, and the like.

A final, unexpected offshoot of the genre appeared in the amusing satires of Giuseppe Giusti (1809–1850), who revived the spent Bernesque tradition, neglecting the erotic double meanings in favor of a patriotic commitment to Italian unification.

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Giovanni Dall'Orto

### ✓ BÈZE, THÉODORE DE (1519–1605)

Leading Calvinist Reformer. Born in Vézelay in Burgundy he was the son of the Royal Bailiff, a member of a wealthy and powerful noble family. From the age of nine onward he was educated at Orléans and Bourges in the house of the German philologist Melchior Weimar, who indoctrinated the boy in the principles of Protestantism. In 1539 Bèze received a law degree from the University of Orléans, and at the same time fell in love with Marie de l'Etoile, but she died after a year and a half. Bèze settled in Paris, where he enjoyed the company of prominent and literary circles, while his literary talents unfolded at the expense of the career in law for which his father had destined him. After violent inner struggles he broke with his past and moved to Geneva, renouncing the Roman Church for Calvinism. For ten years he taught Greek in Lausanne and completed the metrical translation of the Psalms begun by Clément Marot that afterwards was

incorporated in the French Protestant liturgy; his polemic and theological writings converged with those of Calvin. In 1558 he became a preacher and professor of theology in Geneva, and thereafter was one of the intellectual champions of French Protestantism (his enemies called him "the Huguenot Pope") until his retirement at the end of the century.

Although twice married, Bèze was openly attacked and vilified for his supposed homosexual liaison with his friend Audebert, the evidence for which was an epigram in the collection of poems officially entitled *Poemata*, unofficially *Juvenilia* (first edition: Paris, 1548). Admired by many when they were published, the poems were strongly influenced by the classical authors with their pederastic interests and allusions, so that the evidence for Bèze's homosexuality is uncertain at best. What is certain is that the Catholic party joined in vilifying him after a writer named François Baudouin, who had changed sides several times and been nicknamed Ecebolius by Bèze himself, in 1564 denounced him as a vice-ridden *cinnaedus*. Two years later a Catholic theologian named Claude de Saintes, embroiled in a polemic with Bèze, gave vent to a personal attack in which Bèze's sodomitical union with Audebert is likened to his spiritual embrace of Calvin and Bèze himself is branded as unworthy of a holy office. In 1582 Jérôme Bolsec, a Catholic physician and theologian, further reproached Bèze in a pamphlet addressed to the magistrates of Geneva, saying that many scoundrels and lawbreakers had taken refuge there in the guise of adhering to the Reform, including felons apprehended in the crime of sodomy; that in Paris and Orléans Bèze had in his youth freely pursued sensual pleasures and debauchery of all kinds. The opponent added that a Latin poem had been composed in which Bèze is termed a pathic and an effeminate and lustful poet who became a teacher of sacred eloquence at the instigation of Satan. Others joined in the chorus