

curious fact that the three areas of human experience that generate the greatest amount of slang are money, sex, and inebriation. Though it is now obsolete, the sodomite—usurer link united the first two.

In France the word *bougrerie* never gained status as a term of art in law codes, though it sometimes makes its way into reports of executions ("sin of buggery"). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a contrast developed between *bougre* for the active homosexual partner as against *bardache* for the passive one. Modern French retains the old word, together with the female counterpart *bougresse*, mainly as a jocular term of pity or mild abuse; the sexual content has almost entirely faded away. As has been noted, the English enshrined the term buggery in the statute books and legal commentaries, tying the meaning to the sexual aspect, but broadening it to include a whole spectrum of carnal offenses (excepting only lesbianism and masturbation).

In southern Europe forms prevailed in which the second consonant is soft; hence Spanish *bujarrón* and Italian *buggerone* (cf. the French variant *bougeron*). At the end of the fifteenth century the Italian word was carried northwards to German-speaking countries by travelers and mercenaries in the adapted form *puseran(t)*, with devoicing of initial 'b.' Thus Albrecht Dürer labels his 1504 drawing of the Death of Orpheus "Der erst puserant" (the first bugger). Although the word has disappeared in modern German, variants linger as loan words in several neighboring Slavic tongues. Thus when the American gay poet Allen Ginsberg visited Prague in 1965 his popularity among Czech students provoked the ire of the Communist authorities and he was roughed up by a plainclothesman who yelled the epithet *buzerant* at him (see "Kral Majales," *Collected Poems*, 1947–1980, 1984, p. 353).

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BURCHIELLESQUE POETRY

This term denotes a type of Italian poetry (*alla burchia*; "haphazardly") utilizing "Aesopic" or coded language, and bristling with obscene double meanings which offer a certain parallel to the famous poems in *jargon* of François Villon (1431–ca. 1463). Burchiellesque poetry flourished from the early years of the fifteenth century through the sixteenth. The leading practitioner of the mode was Domenico di Giovanni, known, because of his facility, as "Il Burchiello" (1404–1449).

Among the followers and successors of Il Burchiello, one should note Antonio Cammelli (1436–1502) and Bernardo Bellincioni (1452–1492), who wrote many compositions on homosexual themes. Various other writers also wrote *alla burchia*, notably Domenico di Prato (ca. 1370–ca. 1432), Rosello Roselli (1399–1451), and the great architects Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472).

Burchiellesque language also appeared in prose: for Tuscan Renaissance writers it was standard practice—when they wrote euphemistically on sex (as in private correspondence, for example)—to have recourse to Burchiellesque "cypher," as did Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Berni.

Burchiellesque poetry faded away in the sixteenth century, giving life to the less exuberant variant of burlesque known as *Bernesque*. Yet elements of Burchiellesque language lingered for a long time, for example in the Roman pasquinades satirizing the popes.

Often innocent nonsense, foreshadowing the later limericks, Burchiellesque language consists entirely in double meanings, which usually stem from riddles or puns; these are almost always obscene, and often homoerotic. To the uninitiated burchiellesque poems can seem complete in themselves in terms of their surface meaning, so that they seem harm-

less if somewhat eccentric. In other instances they are hermetic at the surface level also, and indecipherable to anyone who does not possess the key.

Interpreting burchiellesque language is difficult, inasmuch as often the solution is a riddle leading to another riddle. For example, it is possible to read the verb *tagliare* (meaning "to cut" in standard Italian) as "to sodomize" because it echoes the word *tagliere*, "chopping board." In former times these boards were round, not square; hence the meaning "anus." The metaphorical meaning of *tagliere* parallels that of *tondo* ("round" and, by extension, a round sculpted or painted relief), which also means "anus."

Burchiellesque jargon is generally constructed through symmetrical contrasts: *asciutto*, "dry" = "sodomy" vs. *umido*, "humid" = "heterosexual coitus"; *valle*, "valley" = "vulva" vs. *monte*, "mountain" = "anus. In other comparisons the counterpart of the penis is not the vagina, but usually the anus.

Penetration is not usually expressed in the heterosexual sense, but commonly in terms of anal copulation with a man as object. This prominence of sodomitical coitus probably reflects the "transgressive" intent of burchiellesque poetry, for which anal relations are more suited than "banal" heterosexual contact.

The difficulty of burchiellesque language, and the "scandalous" subject matter, have combined to discourage scholarship. Even today there is no critical edition of the works of Il Burchiello, the founder of the trend, nor has a key been worked out that would enable one to recover all the hidden meanings.

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BURMA

A southeast Asian republic of about 40 million people, Burma is an agricultural, mountainous country. Conquered by Great Britain in the nineteenth century, it achieved independence in 1948. Knowledge of homosexuality in Burma is complicated by the fact that the country has been largely closed to tourists since independence (except for brief tourist visas of up to seven days), by the dominant language, Burmese (which is tonal and part of the Sino-Tibetan group), by the Burmese script (which derives from south Indian scripts), and by the plurality of cultures and cultural influences. More than one hundred indigenous languages are spoken in Burma. Besides Burmese, Mon, Shan, Karin, Chinese, and Kachin are spoken by large numbers of people, though at the time of the British occupation only Burmese, Mon, and Shan had written alphabets.

Animism, which preceded Buddhism, introduced in the fifth century, is still practiced by the hill tribes in the northeast such as the Shans, Karins, and Kachins. Among the Kachin, the Gashadip, according to Joel M. and Ester G. Maring, is "conceptualized as a bisexual human being who controls the fertility of the soul and of human beings. The Kachin chief makes periodic offerings to the *gashadip*." Such bisexual mythic beings appear widely across southeast Asia, in Indonesia and in northern Australia.

Burmese Buddhism, like that of Thailand, is of the Theravada School dominant in Sri Lanka and in Southeast Asia and has been compulsory in large parts of the country since King Anawaratha conquered Thaton in the south in 1044 and forcibly removed the entire population, including Buddhist monks, to Pagan in the north. It has been tolerant of homosexuality. Monks are said to be highly sexed and tourists are warned to be careful of sexual advances—though such reports may be exaggerated. Transvestism is also