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HENRI III OF FRANCE (1551–1589)

French king, the son of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici. Elected to the throne of Poland in 1573, he left the country on the death of his brother Charles IX of France to ascend the throne at the age of 23. Because he refused to adopt the measures for extermination of the Protestants advocated by the Catholic party under the leadership of the Duc de Guise (which had in 1572 perpetrated the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve), he found himself at war with its supporters, and even Paris and other cities rebelled against him. He made common cause with the Protestant Henri of Navarre, but in his camp at St. Cloud he was assassinated by a fanatical Dominican monk and died at the age of 38.

Seldom has the homosexuality of a ruler been so public and undisguised, or have the favorites of a monarch been so clearly identified as in the life of Henri III. Though exhibiting many traits of the stereotypical homosexual, and that of the effeminate variety, he is indicated by reliable sources to have felt passionate attraction to women as well. If he remained childless, it was in the opinion even of his foes because an incurable gonorrhea had left him sterile. Many writers have tried to ascribe his homosexual leanings to a stay in Venice in 1574, where satiated with the charms of the opposite sex which he had known only too well, he succumbed to the pederastic vice so rampant in Italy, or to the syphilis which he contracted in the city on the Adriatic. The most that he could have learned was how many others shared his proclivities, and the moment Henri became king of France, he gave free rein to his homosexual urges and also to the fondness for luxury and extravagance which the ancients equated with effeminacy.

Henry was well-built, charming in looks, and gracious in manner; his hands were especially beautiful. His character was marked by the feminine traits of tenderness and religiosity. In 1583 an anxiety-provoking dream even caused him a crisis of piety in which he founded a brotherhood called the Penitents that staged processions in which the king, his mignons, and other dignitaries of the court participated in masks. Other feminine traits of his were a fondness for lapdogs, for childish games and toys, and for elegant costumes. He loved to wear women's clothing and even to appear at public events clad in the style affected by the ladies of his court. Not long after ascending the throne he surrounded himself with handsome young men in their early twenties—the mignons, who used all the feminine arts to ape the king's own proclivities in dress, speech and walk. Two categories of mignons can be differentiated: the *mignons de coeur*, who shared his pleasures and erotic passions—Quélus, Maugiron, Livarol, Saint-Mégrin and others, and the *mignons d'état*, who played a military and political role and acquired a real influence over the affairs of the reign—notably Joyeuse and d'Epéron. Henri cemented his ties with the mignons not just by showering them with favors and gifts of all kinds, but also by arranging marriages for them that were celebrated in a lavish and fabulous manner. He was not troubled by jealousy when they took an interest in the opposite sex.

A contemporary satire entitled *L'île des Hermaphrodites* (The Isle of the Hermaphrodites) depicts the life of the mignons and their protector in a quite perceptive manner. The author describes how entering the palace of the hermaphrodites he sees them beautifying their persons to enter the inner sanctum of their lord for sensual mysteries in which he cannot follow. The walls of one room are hung with tapestries depicting Hadrian's passion for Antinous, another with scenes from the life of Heliogabalus, a third cham-

ber has a bed whose roof depicts the marriage of Nero and Pythagoras. The mignons join in the praises of their master and his fair hands. The significance of this work has not been fully appreciated, as it owes its title to the misunderstanding of the phenomenon of the *berdache* in accounts of the New World; the *berdaches* were mistaken for genuine hermaphrodites rather than as individuals who had adopted a culturally prescribed cross-gender role. Given the attitude toward homosexuality that had prevailed in Latin Christendom since the thirteenth century, the conduct of Henri and his mignons inevitably provoked enormous hostility and indignation, and a considerable literature defaming the king and his court was composed that formed the basis for later treatments of the period by historians who gave vent to their homophobia. Only in modern times has it been possible to form a truer picture of the virtues and foibles of a monarch whose public and private life was molded by the homosexual and effeminate in his personality.

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HENRY, PRINCE (1726-1802)

Brother of Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia. Less distinguished than his brother, who occupied the throne for forty-six years, Henry was another homosexual member of the House of Hohenzollern. The portrait of him drawn by historians varies according to the degree of sympathy or aversion which they feel for him. A great lover of the military, Henry took an

aggressive part in the Seven Years War and was particularly renowned for his role in the battle at Friedberg (October 29, 1762), which he won, ending the war. He retired early from active duty and lived thereafter as a dilettante in castle Rheinsberg, a few hours distant from Berlin. Like Frederick, he used the French language exclusively for his literary compositions. An enthusiastic admirer of Voltaire and of French philosophy, Henry loved uninhibited discussions of morality and metaphysics. He took particular pleasure in the theatre, while maintaining his own troupe of French performers. His friends fell into two categories: one group satisfied his intellectual and literary needs, the other his homoerotic passions and sensual cravings.

Henry's personality was profoundly masculine: reflective and calculating, endowed with firm will and extraordinary memory, real talent for literature, and outstanding ability as a military strategist. But with these qualities he combined a feminine sensitivity and antipathy to cruelty and brutality in any form, compassion for the weak, and nobility and generosity toward his foes, especially the French. Physically he was small, his face unattractive, his whole figure somewhat ill-proportioned, so that one author remarked that seldom has such a beautiful soul and great talent had such a wretched exterior. All authors who dealt with the sexual side of his character agreed that he felt no love for women, and the compulsion which his older brother exercised on him to marry only strengthened his aversion to the opposite sex. He scarcely concealed his passion for young men and effeminate homosexual types, and he even had a temple of friendship built whose walls were decked with French inscriptions glorifying friendship—which in his case often meant a sensual passion for his youthful adjutants. Some of his favorites were of quite inferior station in life and unworthy character, yet possessing a coarse male attractiveness which the prince could not resist. One of these, a Major Kaphengst,