Sweet Prince of Orange or Lavender?

BY WILLIAM A. PERCY

The outing that has provoked the most acrimony since our book, *Outing: Shattering the Conspiracy of Silence* (by William A. Percy and Warren Johansson -- Haworth, 1994), went to press is that of a king dead for almost three hundred years. The Dutch Prince William of Orange (1650-1702) became William III of England after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Although King Billie's sexuality has been extensively discussed in print, Protestant Ulster MP Ian Paisley, a leading Orangeman but hardly a reputable historian, has dismissed our allegations about the Prince as "nonsense." Incredulity about the Prince's homosexuality extends to the average graduate of two of America's oldest universities, Princeton and William and Mary, both named for the great Protestant hero.

In 1867 Wilhelm Ludwig Holland published some primary source documents as *Briefe der Herzogin Elisabeth Charlotte von Orléans aus den*
Jahren 1676 bis 1706 as volume 88 of the Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart. In this correspondence the German wife of Monsieur, the homosexual brother of Louis XIV of France, discussed William of Orange's homosexuality (The letters of October 12, November 4, and December 13, 1701). As early as 1870 Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, the founder of the homosexual emancipation movement in Germany, in one of his brochures announced his plan to treat the subject in a journal which he intended to publish under the title Uranus, but the periodical—for unknown reasons—never saw the light of day (Note from Warren Johansson). Hermann Michaelis, "Aus den Briefen der Herzogin Elisabeth Charlotte von Orléans (1652-1722). Ein Beitrag zur Bisexualität im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert," Vierteljahrsberichte des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees 4 [= Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen 13]: 62+ (1912), a journal published by Magnus Hirschfeld, who succeeded Ulrich as head of the homosexual emancipation movement, confirmed the Prince’s unnatural instincts.


Henriette Elisabeth Heimans dealt at length with the William’s personality in Het Karakter van Willem III Koning-Stadhouder: Proeve
eener Psychographie (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1925), pp. 21-25, 83. She referenced frequently from contemporary sources about William's homosexuality, even from Voltaire: "Il n'aimait pas les femmes" and even the Whig historian and politician Lord Macaulay, who idealized the Prince, equivocated. "We can hardly suppose that he was much in the habit of reading Jacobite pamphlets; and, if he did read them, he would have seen that the unalterable affection which he felt from his boyhood to his death for three or four of the bravest and most trusty friends that ever a prince had the happiness to possess, was made a ground for imputing to him abominations as foul as those which are buried under the waters of the Dead Sea".

emitus from Princeton, perhaps the world's leading expert on sex in early modern England, told me, "Everybody knows that" about William's homosexuality.

It is possible that William of Orange's sexual orientation has become such a bone of contention in part because the British exposed the homosexuality of the Catholic humanitarian Sir Roger Casement, who supported the Easter Rebellion of 1916 to justify their execution of him. Whatever explains such a hostile reaction in the British Isles, especially those in the Orange Lounge such as Paisley, to the truth about William of Orange, it is perhaps less difficult to grasp why at William and Mary or Princeton University it is not common knowledge that those two institutions are named after a queer.

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