

been excluded from official editions of the complete works. The poems reflect Verlaine's long history of homosexual attachments and casual encounters, beginning in his teens and reaching its high points in the love affairs with Rimbaud and Lucien Létyinois. The rural lads of "Mille e Tre" may have been inspired by his sexual escapades at Coulomnes, while "In This Café" harkens back to the two bohemian lovers masturbating in public in symbolic defiance of one of society's most stringent taboos. The pieces have their flaws: the sonnets of *Les Amies* are slightly cloying, and a certain repetitiousness (the bane of pornographic literature) afflicts *Hombres*. Nevertheless, in his poems Verlaine created a strange and compulsive beauty by embracing the whole range of sexuality with a hearty candor that is all the more exceptional since it belongs to a time when the morbid and the effete were deliberately cultivated. The homoerotic poems, though sexually explicit and sometimes obscene in language, transcend pornography and achieve true literary status.

In another poem, "Ces passions," first published in *La Cravache* of February 2, 1889, and then included in *Parallèlement*, is Verlaine's boldest exaltation of homosexual love, whose daring contrasts all the more with the regularity of the versification and the faultless composition. At the same time, in the third line of certain stanzas the poet inserts ponderous verses with long words meant to suggest the solemnity of the rites of male bonding which they celebrate, while heterosexual unions are dismissed as trifles, "erotic needs," diversions of couples who dare not go beyond the norm.

Verlaine's 1883 sonnet "Langueur," on the fall of the Roman Empire, was credited with launching the Decadent movement. However this may be, his name remains unalterably linked with fin-de-siècle aestheticism. The musical quality that characterizes his best pieces largely disappeared from his poetry and

other writings in the last decade of his life, but the totality of his work, so imbued with the unique phonic quality of the French language as to be untranslatable, ranks him with the great masters of French poetry.

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VIAU, THÉOPHILE DE (1590-1626)

French poet and libertine thinker.

Théophile de Viau was the most talented poet of his generation, which belonged to the first half of the reign of Louis XIII. His militant atheism and stormy, unconventional existence made him the idol of the youth, but his own passion was for Jacques Vallée des Barreaux, nine years his junior, strikingly handsome and intelligent, and gifted with a poetic talent all his own. The master and the disciple went everywhere together, and when they were separated, they exchanged letters that bear witness to a genuine love.

Allowed to return to Paris in March 1620 after less than a year of exile, Théophile was associated with a scandalous publication, a particularly obscene collection of poems entitled *Le Parnasse satyrique*, that appeared in November 1622 and was followed by a decree of Parlement in July 1623 ordering his arrest. The poet fled Paris, but a month later was in absentia sentenced to death by burning at the stake. On the frontier of Picardy Théophile was arrested and brought in captivity to Paris, where an undercover agent of the Jesuits named Louis Sageot denounced him for divine lèse-majesté and sodomy—which in those days were one and the same crime. There followed two years of imprisonment under conditions of suffering and outright torture that nearly broke his spirit, but worst of all was the infidelity of

Des Barreaux, who wrote him a letter urging him to die with joy to purify his soul. However, the wind turned in favor of the accused, and his friends did everything in their power to obtain clemency, which was accorded by a decree of the court in September 1625, which annulled the previous death sentence and merely condemned him to perpetual banishment with confiscation of his goods—in effect an acquittal. There was even a reunion with Des Barreaux. But the poet's health had been fatally undermined by his captivity, and he died the following year.

Théophile's poetry appeals to readers even now because of the poet's intense self-awareness and his ability to give personal expression to common human experience. In the course of the seventeenth century there were ninety-three editions of his poetry, compared with sixteen of Malherbe's. His verses remain scattered in various collections, and some of the attributions are incorrect or at least questionable. In the poems a spirit of male camaraderie prevails in the attitude of the speaker to his male reader/listener. A tone of fraternal intimacy excludes women except as the butt of humor. The homosexual theme is far more positive than in the classical authors whom Théophile read and imitated, just as he assimilated the traditions of the medieval low literature of the wandering scholars. The mood of the poems is an affectionate and gentle humor, or else intimate and endearing love. The major theme is sexuality, but the author can also bemoan the indignities of the patron-poet relationship, indulge in social and political commentary, and reveal his consciousness of the fragility of human life and happiness. One of his poems amasses the names of celebrated homosexuals of past and present, ending with James I of England and his favorite the Duke of Buckingham—which suggests that a certain kind of apologetic line had already begun to take shape in the **libertine** subculture of the Renaissance. Singer of love, of pleasure, of liberty,

Théophile de Viau is the spiritual forbear of later generations of poets of the European gay counterculture.

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VICTIMLESS CRIMES

The concept of "crimes without victims" has played a major role in the legal and sociological debates of the 1960s and later, when the first serious efforts were mounted to urge repeal of the archaic laws against homosexual acts. It was especially promoted by the work of the American sociologist Edwin M. Schur, *Crimes Without Victims: Deviant Behavior and Public Policy* (1965), which addressed the issues of abortion, homosexuality, and drug addiction.

Basic Features of the Concept. Crimes without victims are the willing exchange by adults of strongly demanded but legally proscribed goods or services, or the commission of acts proscribed by law in which no third party is directly harmed or involved. A characteristic feature of such laws is that since no third party is harmed, there is no one who has an immediate interest in complaining to the police and presenting evidence against the culprits. Also, such offenses typically have a low visibility; they are committed as far from public view as the participants can manage, and it is only as a result of prearranged police surveillance or even entrapment that the crimes can be detected at all.

Schur's argument starts from the premise that "criminal laws do not always effectively curb the behavior they proscribe," but that "laws which are highly ineffective from the standpoint of sheer deterrence" may yet "have pronounced impact. . . . Indeed, it is precisely the criminal laws which fail to deter which may be of greatest interest to the sociolo-