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“THE SILLIEST WOMAN WHO EVER LIVED”: PHILIPPE I DUC D’ORLEANS AND  
SEXUAL AND GENDER TRANSGRESSION IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

For historians of early modern Europe, the seventeenth century is often seen as a time of repression and monarchical absolutism; of witch-hunts and religious persecution in which any deviance from the Church-sanctioned norm was seen as a threat to society and the natural cosmic order of things. It is further argued that this deviance was considered particularly worrying when it came in the form of sexual or gender transgression, as both were considered a disruption to the patriarchal system that dictated their norms.<sup>1</sup> This concern can be seen in the growing discourse throughout the century surrounding gender and sexual practice; the literature of the time is rife with references to the idea of a 'war' between the two sexes, with many male writers expressing fears that women were attempting to 'transcend' their traditional roles and take a place in the male domain, the consequence of which was an increased focus on the meanings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'.<sup>2</sup> Expressions of gender transgression, such as cross-dressing, were forbidden by the Church and the Old Testament's condemnation of the practice was reinforced by a papal interdiction against it in c.1522.<sup>3</sup> Sexual transgressions often came under the category of 'sodomy' - a term that had theological as well as criminal implications; as a biblical sin it was condemned by the Church and the prescribed penalty of death by burning had its roots in the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> Although it is clear that the word itself could be used to mean any sexual act that was 'against nature' (anything non-procreative), by the seventeenth century a narrower use had emerged in which it dictated sexual acts solely between males.<sup>5</sup> Sexual and gender transgressions were also strongly linked in popular culture

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<sup>1</sup> H. Kamen, *Early Modern European Society*, (London, 2000), p. 154

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153

<sup>3</sup> J. Harris, *Hidden Agendas: Cross-Dressing in 17<sup>th</sup> Century France*, (2005, Tübingen), p. 39

<sup>4</sup> D. Hosford, *Le Vice Italien: Philippe D'Orleans and Constructing the Sodomite in Seventeenth-century France*, Diss. (City University of New York, 2013), p. 77

<sup>5</sup> W. Naphy, *Sex Crimes: from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, (Stroud, 2002), p. 86

with social disorder; for example Sandro Boticelli's paintings for Dante's *The Divine Comedy* illustrate the area of Hell reserved for the punishment of sodomites in a skewed perspective that demonstrates the social 'disruption' brought about by the sin.<sup>6</sup>

However, the reality is more complex than one of simple persecution. As historians such as Helmut Puff have shown, this 'persecutory' society existed alongside a Renaissance inspired interest in classical culture and the homoerotic art and literature that came with it, as well as a celebration of male bonds and affection.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, despite the Church's condemnation of cross-dressing and gender transgression, there was also a fascination with the phenomenon throughout the seventeenth century in France which is observable both in the period's literature and cultural phenomena such as court ballets.<sup>8</sup> Emblematic of this dichotomy is Philippe I duc d'Orlean: as the only younger brother of Louis XIV, he was notorious for his effeminate cross-dressing and string of male favourites, and was derided by a contemporary as "The silliest woman who ever lived", yet he also has a place in history as a successful military commander, notable for his defeat of William of Orange at the Battle of Cassel in 1677.<sup>9</sup> Philippe seems at first glance something of an oxymoron; described by his peers as excessively effeminate and vain, and yet also celebrated as a gloriously brave warrior and son of France; seen by historians such as John Wolf as 'poor Philippe, a homosexual whose rouge, jewels, ribbons and lace brought a smile to many faces', and yet siring one of the greatest dynasties in France and earning the epithet 'the grandfather of all Europe'.<sup>10</sup> However, a closer investigation of the source material reveals that the ways in which sexual and gender transgressions were viewed in seventeenth century France were more complex than is

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<sup>6</sup> H. Puff, 'Early Modern Europe: 1400-1700' in (ed.) Aldrich, R., *Gay Life and Culture: a World History*, (London, 2006), p. 80

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79

<sup>8</sup> Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 15

<sup>9</sup> L. Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, (Cambridge, 2006), p.341

<sup>10</sup> J. Wolf, *Louis XIV*, (London, 1968), p. 605

traditionally laid out. Joseph Harris has noted that in scholarship the terms 'transgression' and 'subversion' are too readily conflated in their usage, but that: 'transgression is not synonymous with subversion. While transgression breaks a rule, this rule is only subverted if an act of transgression itself somehow demonstrates its invalidity'.<sup>11</sup> Using Harris' assertion as a basis for its investigation, this dissertation will argue that Philippe's 'transgressions' were not considered dangerously deviant or subversive, nor were the apparently juxtaposing sides to his character irreconcilable in early modern thought.

### **Secondary Literature**

Philippe I d'Orleans has received poor treatment from historians, from his contemporaries to the majority of modern scholarship; in death as in life he has been overshadowed by his older sibling 'the Sun King'. Despite the increasing academic interest in the history of sexuality, the language used by modern scholars has often matched or exceeded the abusive and dismissive tone found in some of the seventeenth century sources. The English language biographical material about Philippe is scarce; his most recent full-length biographer Nancy Barker Nichols exhibits homophobia throughout her book 'Brother to the Sun King' and analyses the subject of his sexual and gender transgressions through a Freudian lens which is entirely unhelpful in its outdated psychoanalytical assertions. Desmond Hosford has come closer to delivering Philippe justice in his dissertation '*Le Vice Italien: Philippe D'Orleans and Constructing the Sodomite in Seventeenth-century France*'. The work argues convincingly that Philippe is representative of a turning point in the history of 'sodomy' which saw a transition from the Greco-Roman originated 'warrior sodomite' to the degraded and 'effeminate' sodomite of the new salon culture in the seventeenth century and is a detailed analysis of early

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<sup>11</sup> Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 29

modern constructions of gender and sexuality which has provided an excellent grounding for this dissertation to draw on.<sup>12</sup>

Although Philippe is often relegated to a small paragraph in larger histories as an example of sexual or gender deviance, the wider literature surrounding the history of sexuality and early modern Europe has seen many innovations in recent decades. Cross dressing and other aspects of gender transgression have been explored by scholars such as Joseph Harris and Vern Bullough, and the construction of early modern masculinities has been investigated by, among others, Patricia Simons and Lewis Seifert. Early modern sexualities and homosexuality in particular have also received an increased amount of attention, with authors such as Katherine Crawford analysing the impact of the Renaissance and useful overviews delivered by Louis Crompton or Stephen Murray. The links between gender, sexuality and their performances are currently the subject of interesting and developing debate, and this dissertation will draw on ideas from this wider scholarship in order to assess the place of Philippe and transgression in seventeenth century France within this growing discourse.

Although I will be discussing opinions surrounding same-sex sexual practices and preferences throughout, this work does not aim to solve nor discuss in great detail the continuing debate between 'social-constructionists' and 'essentialists', as I believe there are merits and problems to both frameworks when investigating the history of sexuality. Despite the fact that many historians have seen fit to do so (and often in a disparaging way), I will not use the terms 'homosexual' or 'bisexual' when discussing Philippe or his contemporaries as I believe it in this context to be ahistorical, and unable to convey a completely accurate representation of the way both he and his peers would have viewed his sexuality. I will,

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<sup>12</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italien*, p. iv

however, follow John Boswell in his use of the word as an adjective rather than a noun, i.e. to describe same-sex sexual activity and desire.<sup>13</sup>

### **Chapter Layout**

The first chapter 'Monsieur at Court' uses extracts from *memoires* of several nobles present in the court of Louis XIV as well as the letters of Philippe's second wife Elisabeth-Charlotte to explore the ways in which sexual and gender transgressions were viewed by the elite in seventeenth century society. It will explore the ways in which Philippe's 'effeminacy' was viewed and manipulated by those around him and analyse the ways in which cross-dressing could symbolise very different things depending on the context and the person cross-dressing, using court ballets and performances in which this occurred as examples. It will then examine elite attitudes to male homosexual relations and show that, while official disapproval for this can certainly be seen, there was a greater amount of tolerance than might be suspected and that this form of sexual transgression was only dealt with severely when it threatened to disrupt the social order. Ultimately it will conclude that while both Philippe's effeminate cross-dressing and sexual preferences would have been considered traditionally transgressive, they were not treated as subversive but were in fact utilised to maintain the social hierarchy by ensuring that he could not be seen as a rival/threat to his older brother.

The second chapter 'Monsieur on the Battlefield' will investigate the image of Philippe as a warrior, looking in particular at reactions to his victory over William of Orange at the Battle of Cassel in 1677 and using once again court *memoires*, the letters of his wife Elisabeth-Charlotte and some contemporary verse to explore this. It will first draw on Hosford's image of the 'Warrior Sodomite' to explain how the juxtaposing figure of Philippe as an effeminate

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<sup>13</sup> J. E. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*. (Chicago, 1980), p. 44

cross-dresser and sodomite could be reconciled with that of the valiant warrior described as an 'Achilles' on the battlefield in early modern thought. It will then show that ironically it was when Philippe was at his least transgressive in terms of gender that he posed the greatest threat of subversion to the social order, as his 'masculine warrior' identity could have allowed him to appear as a rival to his older brother the King.

The third chapter 'Monsieur on the Streets' will use various satirical street songs and poems from a collection known the *Chansonnier Maurepas* to investigate the ways in which transgression was viewed by those who were not part of the aristocracy. It will compare satires concerning Philippe from the second half of the seventeenth century with satirical material from two earlier periods: the so-called *Mazarinades* disseminated during the *Fronde* Rebellion (1648-53) and the polemic lambasting King Henri III during the Wars of Religion (1562-98). It will conclude that, while by no means free from hostility, the satires of the later seventeenth century do not equate sexual and religious transgression with the subversion of cosmic and social order in the way that the earlier works do. It will also consider the differences between 'elite' and 'common' views on sexual and gender transgression and propose that the traditional blunt separation of the two should be reconsidered.

## **CHAPTER ONE: MONSIEUR AT COURT**

### **Introduction:**

The reign of Louis XIV is recognised as an important point in the history of the French aristocracy, and the extravagant palace of Versailles built over his father's hunting lodge outside Paris has become the symbol of seventeenth century absolutism. It is also a period for which we have a remarkable insight into the private lives of noble men and women due to the fashion for and survival of court *mémoires* and letters.<sup>14</sup> This chapter will look at some of these *mémoires*, including those of the self-proclaimed cross-dresser the Abbé de Choisy, of Louis de Rouvrey, duc de Saint Simon and of the curé of Versailles (1686-1707) François de Hebert, as well as several of the letters written by Philippe's second wife both during their marriage and after his death. Through an examination of these sources and secondary scholarship it will conclude that, while Philippe's behaviour was often the subject of court 'gossip' and was clearly considered transgressive, it was not necessarily considered subversive. On the contrary, Philippe's effeminate behaviour and sexual preference for men were arguably used by his brother Louis XIV and others in order to maintain a peaceful political stability and the social hierarchy necessary for an uncontested reign. Furthermore, this chapter will also argue that while 'sodomitical' sexual practices and gender transgression were officially condemned by the Church, amongst the court aristocracy there was a sense of tolerance which was only disrupted if the actions went beyond transgression and approached subversion of the social order, as demonstrated by the scandal of 1682.

### **'The silliest woman who ever lived': Philippe and effeminacy**

Philippe's 'effeminacy' is well attested to in the contemporary sources, as is his penchant for cross-dressing. Saint-Simon described him as a 'short, potbellied man mounted

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<sup>14</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, p. 339

on stilts, so high were his shoes, always adorned like a woman, covered with rings, bracelets and jewels all over, with a long wig all exposed in front, black and powdered and ribbons everywhere he could put them, full of all kinds of perfumes' and his second wife Liselotte frequently mentioned his interest in finery and fashion in letters to her relatives.<sup>15</sup> One source for Philippe's cross dressing is the *Mémoires* of Abbé François Timoléon de Choisy (1644-1724), a nobleman whose mother was on intimate terms with the mother of Philippe and Louis, Anne of Austria and who had known the princes from their youth. Choisy claims in his *Mémoires* (published posthumously) that he himself was brought up as a girl by his mother, and that as an adult he had lived fluctuating between his two 'vices' of gambling and cross-dressing. Although Scott has argued convincingly that the *Mémoires* cannot be taken at face value, as much of their content does not add up historically due to a lack of chronology or any outside evidence of their events, they are still a useful source of information as they provide not only information concerning Philippe but are an example of a self-consciously transgressive voice.<sup>16</sup> Choisy reports that, while he personally was free to cross-dress as he pleased, Philippe was not; apparently he 'longed to dress as a woman himself, but did not dare, because of his position' as a prince'.<sup>17</sup> However, in the evening he would 'put on cornets, ear pendants and patches, and gaze at his reflection in a mirror'.<sup>18</sup> This description fits with other portraits, such as that written in a letter to Anne of England which describes him as affecting the manners of women and states that 'his make-up resembles the ladies more than a general's'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, translated in Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan, Jr (ed.), *Homosexuality in Early Modern France: A Documentary Collection*, (Oxford, 2001), p. 125

<sup>16</sup> P. Scott, 'Authenticity and Textual Transvestism in the Memoirs of the Abbe de Choisy' *French Studies* 69.1 (2014), p. 15

<sup>17</sup> Abbe de Choisy, *Memoirs*, trans. R.H.F. Scott, *The Transvestite Memoirs of the Abbe de Choisy* (London, 1973), p. 63

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Boislisle, *Portraits et Catactères* 37, translation in Wolf, *Louis XIV*, p. 605

However, while this behavior was clearly transgressive of normative gender boundaries, there is an argument to be made that this transgression did not result in subversion of the social order in the way that gender transgression is often portrayed as doing.

### **Deliberate Effeminacy?**

It was suggested by some, including Choisy, that the young Philippe was deliberately treated as a girl by his regent mother Anne of Austria, with the view that an 'effeminate' younger brother would not prove a threat to Louis XIV.<sup>20</sup> The possibility of this threat was all too real in the aftermath of civil wars towards the beginning of the young Louis' reign known as the *Fronde* Rebellion (1648-53), in which many nobles rose up against the monarchy under the leadership of Louis XIII's younger brother Gaston.<sup>21</sup> Barker argues against this theory of effeminisation, suggesting that it has been born of childhood paintings of Philippe, but that at the time all boys wore dresses until they were breached.<sup>22</sup> However, the Abbé's memoirs point to a more deliberate and obvious effeminisation of the prince when he claims that 'they dressed me up as a girl every time the little Monsieur came to play' and that, when Philippe arrived, the ladies of the court 'began to dress him and arrange his coiffure.... His jacket was removed so that he could put on the coats and skirts of women'.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that what is being described here is not the fitting of a traditional 'childhood' dress; Choisy specifically describes the outfits as a 'woman's' and separates it from the clothes in which Philippe arrived. Furthermore, Choisy is not the only source to make claims of this kind: Philippe's cousin known as 'la grande Mademoiselle' also described finding Philippe 'dressed as girl with blonde hair' while at the Louvre.<sup>24</sup> Although we may never be sure if Philippe was indeed raised quite literally as Anne's

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<sup>20</sup> N. Barker, *Brother to the Sun King: Philippe, Duke of Orléans*, (1989, London), p. 58

<sup>21</sup> J. Spangler, 'The Problem of the Spare' *The Court Historian*, 19.2 (2014), p. 123

<sup>22</sup> Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 12

<sup>23</sup> Choisy, *Mémoires*, translated in Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 60

<sup>24</sup> Hammond, *Gossip, Sexuality and Scandal*, p. 102

“little girl”, the reasoning behind these claims is of interest.<sup>25</sup> As Louis’ younger brother, Philippe was always made aware of the precarious social position he had to negotiate: on the one hand he could never be allowed to usurp his brother in anything, or become a rallying point for a rebellion as their uncle had, but on the other, until the birth of the Dauphin in 1661, he was also Louis’ heir.<sup>26</sup> This balance is wonderfully illustrated in a verse that accompanied the two brothers’ performances in a ballet of 1653, in which Louis took the part of the rising sun and the thirteen year old Philippe that of the morning star:

After the great star of the heavens/ I am the star who shines the most/ There is nobody who questions me/ And my light so young and bright/ Is much lesser than the Sun/ And so much more than all the rest/ I am just a simple star (...)/ And my destiny teaches me as much as I am not first <sup>27</sup>

Although he was ‘so much more than all the rest’ it was clearly thought necessary to remind Philippe continuously that he was ‘much lesser than the sun’ that was his brother. Whether Philippe was deliberately ‘effeminised’ by his mother or not, the fact that this was believed to be so by some contemporaries demonstrates that, in early modern thought, some aspects of gender could be ‘induced in an individual’.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that gender transgression, rather than always subverting the order, could in some instances be used as a method of maintaining it. Philippe’s effeminacy, ‘induced’ or not, may have been encouraged as it reduced his potential as a threat to the position of his older brother.

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<sup>25</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, p. 340

<sup>26</sup> Spangler, ‘The Problem of the Spare’, p. 123

<sup>27</sup> Isaac de Benserade, *Ballet royal de la nuit*, translated in M. Schneider, ‘“Much Lesser than the Sun”: The Self-fashioning of Philippe I, Duc d’Orléans, *The Court Historian*, 19.2 (2014), p. 170

<sup>28</sup> Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 61

**Acceptable transgression? Ballet and performance at court:**

As Harris states, cross-dressing is by nature transgressive: it necessarily crosses some kind of boundary.<sup>29</sup> However, despite the previously mentioned condemnation of the Church, there were instances in which cross-dressing was permitted and was not considered subversive. Furthermore, it could be interpreted in very different ways depending on who was doing it. A good example of this is the various performances that took place at court, particularly the Ballets, in which both Philippe and Louis XIV took part. Both performances involved cross-dressing, but can be interpreted quite differently. As Franko remarks, it is perhaps surprising that male cross-dressing, traditionally identified within gender studies as subversion or deviance from Western patriarchal dominance or anxieties surrounding masculinity, should have had such a prominent place as a royal practice.<sup>30</sup> Ballet and dance had an important role to play in the court of Louis XIV; in 1662 he founded the Royal Dance Academy and began to assert his control over the regulation of dance pedagogy, which has been interpreted by Franko as a reaction to the burlesque performances which under his father's reign had been used to satirise the monarchy.<sup>31</sup> Louis' performance in the Ballets also brought the royal body under scrutiny, and it could therefore be used to communicate messages to the audience about royal authority. Through analysis of the seventeenth century figure of the hermaphrodite, Franko has argued that an androgynous appearance could represent self-sufficiency both in terms of self-fertilisation and the theory of the king's 'two bodies' (mortal and body politic); Louis' assuming of both male and female attire (for example he appeared as both Apollo and a female Fury in *Les Noces de Pelée et Thetis* in 1654) did not therefore compromise or subvert his masculinity or patriarchal authority in any way, but rather made use of this 'two body' theory

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>30</sup> M. Franko, "The King Cross-Dressed: Power and Force in Royal Ballets." in Melzer, S. E. and Norberg K (eds.), *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, (1998, California), p. 64

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68

to communicate the sexual and political sufficiency of the absolute monarchy.<sup>32</sup> Although this argument has some merit, I also agree with Harris' assertion that the appropriation of the female body was seen as acceptable because the female virtues that were portrayed by Louis were then used as a template for kingly virtues, such as restraint and continence, and that the use of mythological female bodies meant that there was a continued separation between the actual body of the King and his onstage persona – his cross-dressing was therefore reduced to an allegory that actually asserted his royal authority.<sup>33</sup>

It is also known that Philippe performed and cross-dressed in royal ballets, making his debut in 1651 in the *Ballet du Roi des Fêtés de Bacchus*.<sup>34</sup> However, as lines accompanying the performance show, his act of gender transgression was interpreted quite differently; while Louis' male and female roles had communicated messages of royal self-sufficiency and been kept separate from his own person through a mythological context, it is suggested that it was Philippe's affection for the female sex that finally allowed him to become a woman himself (à force de m'attacher/ Au beau sexe qui m'est si cher/ En m'habillant comme il s'habille/ Je suis enfin devenu fille).<sup>35</sup> Although Philippe does at the end of the verse decide to return to his male form ('redevenir garçon'), it is clear that the interpretation of his cross-dressing by contemporaries was significantly different from that of Louis'; rather than communicating royal authority it seems that there was considered to be considerable overlap between Philippe's onstage persona and his own effeminate self.<sup>36</sup> This shows interpretations of cross-dressing could vary even within a very specific context, and that one royal body could communicate very different things through its portrayal of femininity than another. It also suggests that there was recognition that Philippe's effeminacy was an integral part of his

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79, Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 62

<sup>33</sup> Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 59

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

personality whether on or off stage. However, while both gender transgressions are interpreted differently, neither are considered subversive; instead, both work within a system in which the system of patriarchal royal authority is maintained.

Another important royal performance that featured both Louis and Philippe was the famously lavish *Carrousel du Roy* (a display of military equestrianism) in 1662, in which Louis represented the Roman Empire and Philippe that of the Persians.<sup>37</sup> As Hosford argues, in his representation of the Persian Empire, Philippe was publically tied to all the connotations of effeminacy, luxury and homosexual practices with which Persia and the Orient were traditionally linked.<sup>38</sup> Although he was permitted a 'warrior' identity therefore, it was performed alongside and linked to his effeminacy. As will be argued in the second chapter, this effeminacy was important as it prevented him from being seen as a viable rival to Louis; indeed, it was when Philippe was at his most traditionally 'masculine' as an actual military commander that he most threatened to subvert the social order.

### **'Le beau vice': Sexual transgression at court**

Philippe is frequently described by historians as 'homosexual', albeit an ahistorical term. As Oresko points out, when investigating the history of 'homosexuality', it is considerably harder to find 'proof' of physical homosexual relations than heterosexual, the main reason being that there are no offspring to provide that proof.<sup>39</sup> Thus, we have no actual evidence that Philippe ever engaged sexually with his notorious favourite the Chevalier de Lorraine or with any other man, as opposed to with his two wives who both produced heirs.<sup>40</sup> However, numerous sources attest to his passion for his own sex, and Madame de Lafayette, a

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<sup>37</sup> Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 84

<sup>38</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italian*, p. 278-9

<sup>39</sup> R. Oresko, 'Homosexuality and the Court Elites of Early Modern France: Some Problems, Some Suggestions, and an Example' in Gerard, K., and Gert, H. (eds), *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*, (New York, 1989), p. 106

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

contemporary biographer of his first wife Henriette of England, remarked that no woman could ever enflame his heart.<sup>41</sup> Barker states that, during Philippe's lifetime, his 'homosexuality' was treated with 'suspicion and controversy' and that male same-sex desire was regarded with 'loathing and contempt'.<sup>42</sup> However, the evidence suggests that for the most part male homosexual activity was at least tolerated, if not approved, by many members of the elite – so much so that it became known as 'le beau vice' and was considered by many to be the preserve of the aristocracy.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, when disapproval is shown for Philippe's sexual proclivities, it is not due to the gender of his favourites, but for his excessive devotion and subjugation to their will. Saint-Simon comments that the prince's lifelong favourite, the Chevalier de Lorraine, 'led Monsieur around by force all his life' and 'was loaded with money and benefices...always remaining publically the master in Monsieur's house-hold'.<sup>44</sup> His second wife, the Princess Palatine Elisabeth-Charlotte (known as Liselotte), who suffered some animosity at the hands of her husband's favourites, also lamented this, complaining that if he 'were not so weak-willed and if the wicked people he is so fond of didn't persuade him to believe everything they wish, he would be the best fellow in the world'.<sup>45</sup> Her refreshingly frank letters to her extended family and friends throughout Europe have been described as 'an encyclopaedia of homosexuality' (she said herself that she had 'become so knowing about it' since coming to France that she could 'write books on the subject') and are a rich source of information about Court Life at Versailles and the sexual activity of her husband and others.<sup>46</sup> Though it is known they were sometimes censored, we have it from her own pen that she never wished for her letters to be

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<sup>41</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, p. 111

<sup>42</sup> Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 57

<sup>43</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, p. 339

<sup>44</sup> Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, p. 125

<sup>45</sup> La Princesse Palatine, *The Letters of Madame: The Correspondance of Elizabeth-Charlotte of Bavaria, Duchess of Orleans*, trans. Stevenson, G. S., (London, 1924), p. 183

<sup>46</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, p. 341, La Princesse Palatine, *The Letters of Madame*, p. 216

seen in print; we can therefore safely assume that the opinions she expresses throughout are indeed her own, and can give considerable credence to the events she records.<sup>47</sup>

She repeatedly asserts that she was not upset by her husband's sexual tastes, but by the worry his financial irresponsibility caused her: 'As for Monsieur, I have truly done my best to persuade him that I have no desire to interfere with his amusements and his passion for his men friends...whenever he has made up his mind to give one of them a large present, such as 100,000 francs or 20,000 crowns he himself stirs up hundreds of quarrels between me and the King....'<sup>48</sup> It is clear that there is no condemnation of any sexual transgression Philippe may have been guilty of in his 'passion for his men friends', but rather of his failings as a husband to manage the family's fortune sensibly. This is reasserted in another letter in which she complains that he 'has absolutely nothing in his head other than young boys' and that while she does not 'find it bad that he lives like this' the money he spends on his 'airheads' meant that she and their children went without.<sup>49</sup>

Although Saint-Simon may have shown contempt for Philippe's behaviour, it should be noted that his contemporaries did not necessarily feel the same. As Puff has argued, the seventeenth century was a time of great contradiction, for alongside the 'official' persecution of 'sodomy' there also existed a culture in which affectionate love between men was celebrated.<sup>50</sup> The resurgence of classical culture during the Renaissance led to a new visibility of homoerotic myths, art and texts, such as Plato's *Symposium* or the sexually charged poetry of Catullus.<sup>51</sup> When the French writer Mademoiselle de Gourney was asked whether she believed sodomy to be a crime she replied 'God forbid that I should condemn what Socrates

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<sup>47</sup> La Princesse Palatine, *The Letters of Madame* p. 249

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113

<sup>49</sup> *Lettres de Madame Duchesse d'Orleans née princesse Palatine*, translated in Hammond, *Gossip, Sexuality and Scandal*, p. 106

<sup>50</sup> Puff, 'Early Modern Europe: 1400-1700', p. 79

<sup>51</sup> K. Crawford, *European Sexualities: 1400-1800*, (Cambridge, 2007), p. 191

practised' and Liselotte writes that those who 'practise this vice...believe it to be enjoyable and find no fault in saying that since Sodom and Gomorrha our Lord God has not punished a single person for this impulse'; as Crompton argues therefore, it seems that there was certainly a 'sophisticated tolerance' of homosexual behaviour among the French elite in the seventeenth century.<sup>52</sup> Even Louis, noted to have a particular abhorrence for this 'sin', was reluctant to inflict punishment: François Hebert, curé of Versailles, reports an incident in which he begged the king's favourite Madame de Maintenon to address the issue of these 'execrable acts' with the king:

"I have told him so," this lady answered me, "and one day when I was urging him to set these things right, he answered me "So I must begin with my brother?" She added that it was the consideration that he had for that prince that stopped him."<sup>53</sup>

However, it is possible that it was more than mere 'consideration' for his brother that accounted for Louis' tolerance; as Murray argues, Philippe's behavior did not 'tarnish the Sun King's prestige' and in fact he may even have benefitted from it.<sup>54</sup> One way this 'benefit' can be seen is in Louis' manipulation of Philippe through his favourite, the Chevalier de Lorraine.

Although Philippe was to have many male favourites over his lifetime, the Chevalier de Lorraine was a permanent fixture. Saint-Simon grumbles that he and another favourite 'made a large fortune there by their looks', and a remarkable number of the sources comment on the complete control the Chevalier had over Philippe.<sup>55</sup> However, as Spangler shows, Louis

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<sup>52</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, p. 345, La Princesse Palatine, *The Letters of Madame*, p. 219

<sup>53</sup> François Hebert, *Mémoires du curé de Versailles, François Hébert, 1686-1704*, translated in Merrick and Ragan, Jr, *Homosexuality*, p. 125

<sup>54</sup> S. Murray, 'Homosexual Acts and Selves in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Homosexuality* 16 (1-2), p. 459

<sup>55</sup> Oresko, 'Homosexuality and the Court Elites', p.114

XIV himself may actually have encouraged the Chevalier's authority over his brother.<sup>56</sup> Saint-Simon remarks that Lorraine enjoyed 'a regard, a distinction and an influence almost as pronounced on the king's part as Monsieur's', and an incident is recorded in which he was permitted to speak to the king in his chambers alone after the *coucher* – a privilege generally reserved for the royal family.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence that Louis used the relationship between the two men to manipulate his brother and maintain his loyalty. In 1672 Madame Sévigné recounted to her daughter that when the Chevalier was permitted to return from an exile in Rome (imposed after he criticized the king), Louis said to Philippe 'I am giving him back to you, and want you to be obliged to me for your whole life'.<sup>58</sup> It is clear that, whatever his personal feelings on Philippe's sexual transgressions, Louis was willing to use them opportunistically to maintain the subjugation of his brother and therefore the social hierarchy. It was only when sexual transgression threatened to disrupt the social order that retributive action was taken, as will be discussed below.

### **'France turned Italian: the Scandal of 1682**

While, as has been noted, there seems to have been a relatively 'enlightened' tolerance for male homosexual relations among the aristocracy and even by Louis XIV, there is at least one instance in which this can be contested. In 1682, most famously reported in an essay entitled 'France turned Italian' in Bussy-Rabutin's *Histoire amoureuse de Gaules* (a novel of erotic intrigues at Versailles), it was discovered that a group of aristocratic youths had formed a secret *confrérie* which required the total avoidance of women and included 'sodomitical' initiation rites.<sup>59</sup> They wore under their robes an emblem of a woman being trampled by a man

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<sup>56</sup> Spangler, J., 'The Chevalier de Lorraine as "Maitre en Titre": The Male Favourite as Prince, Partner and Patron', *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du chateau de Versailles* (2017) <<https://journals.openedition.org/crcv/14427#entries>> [accessed 11th April 2018]

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, p. 126

<sup>58</sup> Sévigné, *Correspondance* vol. 1, translation in Hammond, *Gossip, Scandal and Sexuality*, pp. 107-8

<sup>59</sup> Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, p. 340

in a style reminiscent of St. Michael and the Devil, and included among their number many prominent members of the court nobility, including several princes of the blood – one of whom was the Louis' own son, the Comte de Vermandois.<sup>60</sup> The society came to the king's attention after the initiation of the Prince of Conti, and its members were angrily punished: Vermandois was whipped in his father's presence and many of the other 'brothers' were banished from court.<sup>61</sup> Although scholars such as Hosford have equated exile to a kind of 'death penalty' for the nobility, as it was almost a 'social execution', I would point out that the punishments prescribed for these aristocratic youths should still be considered lenient in comparison to the official penalty for the sin of sodomy which was death by burning.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, I believe that they were punished not for the transgressive act of sodomy itself, but for the manner in which they went about it; the formation of a private society which deliberately eschewed the company of women and was said to have 'priests' who conducted the initiations could be interpreted as attempting to subvert both religious authority and the institution of marriage itself, something which acts of sodomy on their own did not necessarily do. Furthermore, in the seventeenth century, the mockery of women would have been seen as a rejection of *honnêteté* - the practice of refined manners, good taste and conversation that could only be learned from spending time with the female sex and which came into fashion with the rise of salon culture.<sup>63</sup> I believe it was the perceived threat of subversion to institutions fundamental to the order of society which provoked the rage of the king and subsequent punishment, rather than the performance of sexually transgressive acts. It should also be noted that the Chevalier de Lorraine, a noted member of the *confrérie*, was punished only with a private reprimand,

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italian*, p. 73

<sup>63</sup> L. C. Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites" in France, 1660-1715', *Journal of Homosexuality* 41(3-4) (2002), p. 48

likely due in part to his favour with Philippe and arguably because Louis was known to use him as leverage when dealing with his brother.<sup>64</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is clear that despite 'official' Church prohibitions, within the context of the seventeenth century court there was some room for manoeuvre in terms of sexual and gender transgression. Whether Philippe's notorious effeminacy was deliberately instilled by his mother or not, the belief that this was so reveals that, in early modern thought, some aspects of gender could be induced. In the case of Philippe this 'effeminisation' could be used to maintain the political order rather than subverting it, as it reduced his potential as a rival to his brother. Furthermore, an observation of court performances such as ballet reveals that cross-dressing could be interpreted in different ways depending on its context – whether to demonstrate Louis' royal authority or keep Philippe in his place, a traditionally subversive phenomenon was actually used to reaffirm social order. It is also clear that, although some members of the court were disapproving, there was also considerable tolerance of sexual transgression in the form of homosexual behaviour among the elite, and even notoriously hostile Louis was willing to use his brother's tastes to his advantage: the practice of 'sodomy' only became a problem when it threatened subversion, as in the case of the 1682 scandal. Overall, while Philippe was clearly 'guilty' of both sexual and gender transgression, rather than actively condemned, both were used by those around him as a means of preventing disruption to the social hierarchy.

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<sup>64</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italien*, p. 75

## **CHAPTER TWO: MONSIEUR ON THE BATTLEFIELD**

### **Introduction**

Philippe's role as a prince did not just require him to take part in court etiquette, but also to take up arms in defence of his country. Voltaire, when discussing Philippe's part in the Franco-Dutch wars, expressed his surprise that such a notoriously 'effeminate' man could demonstrate such bravery on the field of battle ("Jamais on ne vit un plus grand exemple que le courage n'est point incompatible avec la mollesse").<sup>65</sup> Saint-Simon grudgingly remarks that the Prince "won the battle of Cassel with much valour" and always showed such "natural valour at all the sieges in which he was involved".<sup>66</sup> This chapter will examine the opposing side to Philippe's 'effeminate' persona: his reputation as a brave and talented warrior, looking in particular at his victory over William of Orange at Cassel in 1677. It will argue that, while later writers such as Voltaire and perhaps modern historians may have expected these attributes to be mutually exclusive, this was not necessarily the case during Philippe's own lifetime and will use Hosford's idea of the 'warrior sodomite' to reconcile them. It will further argue that it was in fact while Philippe was at his most traditionally 'masculine' (as an effective and victorious military commander) that he had the greatest potential to subvert the social hierarchy, as it was within this context that he could be seen to 'outshine' his brother, and that this threat may explain his lack of involvement in the military after the victory at Cassel.

Louis' XIV's reign was, like that of his father, notable for its external conflict, with his War of Devolution (1667-8) in the Spanish Netherlands leading to the Dutch War of 1672-8.<sup>67</sup> Within this conflict both Louis himself and Philippe played a role in the offensive campaign. Philippe's talent for military command is almost as well attested as his notorious femininity,

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<sup>65</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italian*, p. 280

<sup>66</sup> Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, p. 125

<sup>67</sup> Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 144

and is mentioned even in his most unflattering biographical descriptions (e.g. that of Saint-Simon). Hosford explains that in early modern France, the 'performative notion of masculinity was closely tied to war' and that the realization of this masculinity came from advancing 'property-based dynastic interests' through military action: a warrior's masculinity was therefore chiefly defined by his valour.<sup>68</sup> For the nobility, the most honourable way of achieving this was to serve in the king's army, headed by the 'exemplary' warrior figurehead of the monarch himself.<sup>69</sup> This notion of masculinity may at first glance seem incompatible with Philippe's notorious effeminacy and reputation for 'sodomy', but as Hosford explains it was considered perfectly possible during the seventeenth century to have contrasting 'inclinations'; the surprise expressed by Voltaire is likely due to the fact that he was writing in the eighteenth century - a time in which association between sodomy effeminacy and lack of martial valour was much greater.<sup>70</sup> It is also proof of Kamen's assertion that, unlike women, early modern males' sexual reputations only made up part of their honour; their involvement in other affairs of state such as politics or war allowed them other opportunities to prove their masculinity.<sup>71</sup> Sexual transgressions could therefore be more easily overlooked.

### **The Warrior Sodomite**

Although, by the time that Voltaire was writing, a strong link had developed between effeminacy and sodomy which caused him to wonder at Philippe's bravery on the battlefield, Hosford demonstrates that during the seventeenth century there still existed the figure of the 'warrior sodomite'.<sup>72</sup> Because early modern masculinity was arguably rooted in military prowess and its connotations of dynastic conquest, it often existed in a 'homosocial' environment; Hosford argues that masculinity and male-male interaction could be played out

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<sup>68</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italien*, p. 92

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280

<sup>71</sup> Kamen, *Early Modern European Society*, p. 170

<sup>72</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italien*, p. 90

along a spectrum in this environment, from platonic bonds to the homoerotic acts of 'warrior sodomites' who, while engaging sexually with men, still displayed typically 'masculine' characteristics of bravery and military skill.<sup>73</sup> Although for Voltaire the image of the 'sodomite' had moved from this 'warrior sodomite' to an 'effeminate sodomite' with a distinct separation between them, this was not the case in the seventeenth century and so Philippe's sexual proclivities and even effeminacy would not have prevented him from obtaining renown for martial valour.

The link between the soldier and the sodomite is also made in the letters of Philippe's own wife, Liselotte. When discussing the sexual tastes of William of Orange, another brilliant military commander frequently accused of sodomy, she wrote that: "What they say of King William is all too true; but all heroes were like that: Hercules, Theseus, Alexander, Caesar, all of them were like that and had their favourites."<sup>74</sup> Here she explicitly makes a link between male-male sexual desire and military bravery, using examples both mythological and real from the ancient world. This supports the argument made in Chapter One that, for the elite, there was a certain tolerance for homosexual behaviour, perhaps due in part to the classical revival of the Renaissance. Knowledge of sexual desire between males in the ancient world did not prevent seventeenth century nobles aspiring to a comparison with them; Louis himself appeared in performances as both the Alexander and Caesar mentioned in Liselotte's letter and Philippe was compared to Achilles after his victory at Cassel.<sup>75</sup>

William of Orange, Philippe and sodomy are further linked in a satirical verse of the time, describing the former's defeat at the hands of the latter:

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94

<sup>74</sup> La Princesse Palatine, *The Letters of Madame*, p. 218

<sup>75</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italien*, pp. 271, 281

‘The great Prince of Orange, that solemn bugger who is avid for raise and immortal renoen, went as far as Cassel to screw Monsieur, but he tried in vain for he himself was fucked. Our own little bardash made him show his arse.’<sup>76</sup>

In this satire sodomy is used as an amusing metaphor for military victory, rather than being seen as an unspeakable sin. Furthermore, Philippe’s homosexual inclinations are openly acknowledged; the use of ‘our own’ suggests a level of acceptance and even fondness, while the role reversal of passive and active homosexual sex within it is clearly treated as an amusing joke, rather than with horror or disgust. It is clear therefore that the figure of the ‘sodomite’ was not incompatible with that of the warrior; his sexual transgression does not detract from his military prowess.<sup>77</sup>

### **‘The blood of France’: Philippe and the nature of gender**

Another testament to the military valour of Philippe is the *Mémoires* of the Abbé de Choisy, in which he describes seeing the prince ‘during campaigns for an entire fifteen hours on horseback’ risking his life and complexion to guns and smoke’<sup>78</sup> Although Choisy commends the bravery of Philippe, it should be noted that he does not completely abandon the picture of him as a vain and effeminate man; he not only risks his life but his *complexion* on the battlefield, and it is not clear which Choisy considers the most important. The emphasis on looks can be explained somewhat by Choisy’s fascination with male beauty, but it is still a good example of ways in which both the traditionally masculine and feminine aspects of Philippe could exist side by side, even in the most extreme of circumstances.

Choisy also reveals something about the way that gender identity was considered in early modern France, when he notes in regard to Philippe that ‘nature was strongest in him,

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<sup>76</sup> Tallemant, *Manuscrit 673*, translation in Hammond, *Gossip, Scandal and Sexuality*, p. 100

<sup>77</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italien*, p. 123

<sup>78</sup> Choisy, *Mémoires*, translation in Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation*, p. 341

when it was necessary to fight he showed the blood of France and won battles'.<sup>79</sup> Choisy expresses the sentiment that, although Philippe may choose to display himself as 'effeminate' in his dress and manners, this did not alter his 'interior' nature or gender identity which was that of a man: as Harris notes this dichotomy may actually have worked to Philippe's advantage, as he was seen to pose no 'threat to French stability from within' due to his effeminacy and yet was still capable of defending France from attacks without.<sup>80</sup> However, as will be argued below, it was actually when Philippe's more 'masculine's side was prominent that he was perhaps viewed as having a greater potential for political subversion.

### **'Outshining the Sun King': Philippe as a threat to Louis XIV**

It has been noted that, following his victory at Cassel, Philippe no longer played a prominent military role in future conflict. Barker has put this absence down to the jealousy of Louis; he never gained the same reputation for military command, as Liselotte wrote in her old age, the king 'was not as brave as Monsieur'.<sup>81</sup> However, as Hosford argues, jealous spite on its own does not adequately explain the concern Philippe's success as a military commander may have held for Louis.<sup>82</sup> Instead, I believe that it was when Philippe was at his most traditionally 'masculine', that he came closest to posing a threat to the political stability of his brother; his reputation for successful military command, bravery and the loyalty shown by his soldiers made him someone that, like his Uncle Gaston, any rebellion against the King could rally around. Furthermore, although Philippe himself humbly dedicated the victory to Louis, the Parisian reaction was to heap praise onto the younger prince; a *Te Deum* was held for him in Notre Dame and he was cast as an 'Achilles' on the battlefield in laudatory texts of the

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<sup>79</sup> Choisy, *Mémoires*, translation in Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 61

<sup>80</sup> Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 61

<sup>81</sup> Elisabeth-Charlotte, *Briefe der Herzogin Elisabeth Charlotte* 1.67, translation in Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 146

<sup>82</sup> Hosford, *Le Vice Italien*, p. 216

time.<sup>83</sup> As Hosford remarks, there was 'historical precedent' for conflict between the monarch and the capital city; the popularity of Philippe with the notoriously changeable Parisian population may therefore have alarmed and brought to Louis' mind memories of the *Fronde* rebellion, in which the monarch's army had to besiege the king's own city.<sup>84</sup> Ironically, therefore, it was when Philippe was *not* committing 'gender transgression', but when he was adhering to the traditionally military masculine standards of the period, that the threat of his subverting the social order was highest. Any praise for Philippe, specifically in a context that was so fraught with early modern notions of dynastic masculinity, had the potential to subvert Louis as the dynastic focus.<sup>85</sup> It may well have been for these reasons that Philippe's 'masculine' pursuits were then prohibited, while for the rest of his life his effeminate pursuits drew no retribution from Louis: once again, the effect of his transgression was to prevent the possibility of his subverting the political order.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is clear that, although it was later treated with surprise, Philippe's valour on the battlefield and martial reputation was not necessarily seen as incompatible with his effeminacy or his sexual preference for men by his contemporaries. This may be due in part to the stereotype of the 'warrior sodomite' which still existed at the time in the homosocial military environment, but which was replaced by the stronger connection between effeminacy, sodomy and a lack of bravery which emerged by the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the *mémoires* of the Abbé de Choisy show that, despite the gender transgression Philippe was guilty of in his cross-dressing and effeminacy, his bravery when fighting for France was considered proof that his inner masculine 'nature' had not been subverted. Interestingly, it is possible to argue that Philippe's masculine 'warrior' identity was considered more dangerous

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207

and subversive as this, combined with the loyalty shown to him by his troops and the fickle city of Paris, posed a genuine threat to Louis' political stability.

### **CHAPTER THREE: MONSIEUR ON THE STREETS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will look at 'popular' views of Philippe's sexual and gender transgressions, using a variety of contemporary satirical street songs. The satires used are taken from a number of sources, but most are from a compilation known as the *Chansonnier Maurepas*. This document was first assembled by Pierre Chairambault (1651-1740) and re-copied by the Comte de Maurepas, Jean Frederic Phelypeaux (1701-1781) in the form we have them today.<sup>86</sup> The satires themselves range from drinking songs to epigrams, and while some are court texts, others were written by the lower classes to be heard in bars and *cabarets* and so they would have been heard across a large social field - both by the nobles of the court and by the citizens on the streets of Paris.<sup>87</sup> Throughout the early modern period, accusations of sodomy and sexual deviance were commonly found in satires of prominent public figures, and Philippe was no exception. However, using the findings of historians such as Seifert, it becomes clear that unlike sexual satire from periods of political instability such as the *Fronde* or the Wars of Religion during the reign of Henri III, the meaning attached to the accusations of sexual or gender transgression was no longer a fear of cosmic subversion and disorder, but instead seemed to be purely for amusement: 'satire for satire's sake'.<sup>88</sup>

Throughout this chapter, the satires from the *Chansonnier Maurepas* concerning Philippe will be compared to other satirical material from the earlier seventeenth century. The

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<sup>86</sup> Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 39

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42

first, the *Mazarinades*, are a large group of political pamphlets which were widely disseminated throughout France during the *Fronde* rebellion, portraying the Queen Regent's Italian advisor Cardinal Mazarin as a political and sexual deviant, responsible for the violent disorder the country was experiencing.<sup>89</sup> A comparison of the *Mazarinades*, and their depiction of sexual and gender transgression, with those of the later seventeenth century that address the actions of Philippe will show that, while the former linked Mazarin's bodily transgressions with moral and political disorder, those concerning Philippe's cross-dressing and 'sodomy' do not. The chapter will then compare the satirical treatment of Philippe's cross-dressing and effeminacy with the polemic against the same actions of Henri III, concluding that while the latter's gender transgression was linked with a subversion of the social order and an inability to rule, Philippe's served only to reaffirm it and the concept of masculinity that was emerging at the end of the seventeenth century.

### **A Disordered Body? Morality vs Mirth**

As Seifert explains, 'according to its classic definition, satire constitutes a form of aggression whose target is made responsible for corrupting an ideal order'.<sup>90</sup> It is clear that the *Mazarinades* of the earlier seventeenth century fit this definition: Cardinal Mazarin is depicted, through his sexual and political transgressions, as a threat to the body of the nation at large, described as a 'tyrant called Julius' whose 'disorderly pleasures' caused the 'ruin of the kingdom'.<sup>91</sup> However, although some of the satires against 'sodomites' from the reign of Louis XIV are hostile enough to fit this description, many (including those targeting Philippe) are not, and some, as Seifert argues, could even be read as homoerotic.<sup>92</sup> For example, one mockingly advocates homosexual activity:

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<sup>89</sup> L. C. Seifert, 'Eroticizing the Fronde: Sexual Deviance and Political Disorder in the *Mazarinades*', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 35.2 (1995) p. 23

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42

<sup>91</sup> *Mazarinade*, translated in Merrick and Ragan, Jr, *Homosexuality*, pp. 108-9

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43

'Friends, let us imitate those great personages/ The glory of their ages/ Who preferred to the cunt/ The ass of a beautiful boy. . .'<sup>93</sup>

These lines are followed by a list of notorious 'sodomites', ranging from citizens of the ancient world to contemporaries who belonged to the entourage of Philippe.<sup>94</sup> Clearly the call to 'imitate those great personages' is meant ironically in the mock imperative of satire; however, by asking the listener even ironically to imitate those that it intends to attack, the literary effect is to invite them to identify or empathize with them, and arguably inadvertently seems to condone or create sympathy for their behaviour. This contrasts strongly with the language of the *Mazarinades* in which Mazarin is attacked with theologically grounded rhetoric which paints him almost as a 'Monster of Sodom'. Furthermore, the evocation of ancient precedents brings to mind once again the letter of the Princess Elisabeth-Charlotte mentioned in Chapter Two, in which she also lists Greek heroes who were known to have same-sex inclinations; it suggests that the knowledge of the 'homeroetic' classical culture reinvigorated by the Renaissance was not confined to the court elites. Even though the spirit of the satire is mocking, it arguably betrays a certain 'enlightened' sympathy in the way that the *Mazarinades* do not.

A further contrast between the later seventeenth century satires concerning Philippe and the *Mazarinades* of the *Fronde* period are the ways in which the sexual acts themselves are conceived. Both Mazarin and Philippe are described as active participants in homosexual sex acts; a satire describing Philippe's death with a 'bottle in his hand' claims that 'if he had died as he had lived/ He would have died with his cock up an ass.'<sup>95</sup> Although crudely highlighting Philippe's reputation for sexual transgression, the tone of the satire is jovial and Philippe's

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<sup>93</sup> *Maurepas*, 1: 131, translated in Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 42

<sup>94</sup> Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 42

<sup>95</sup> BN, Ms, *Fonds Français* 12643, folio 197, translation in Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 41

desire to penetrate other men is not linked to wider anxiety concerning the disruption of the cosmic order. In contrast, the language used to describe the 'penetration' undertaken by Mazarin is far more violent and has an obvious political edge: he is described as a 'Constable with a rod of Sodom/ Exploiting the Kingdom left and right' and a 'Bugger sodomizing the state ...'<sup>96</sup> This is clearly more than mere sexual slander; the *Mazarinades* are interwoven with assumptions linking tyranny and sodomy together with the disruption of the natural order of the state.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, whereas the *Mazarinades* explicitly clamour after the punishment of Mazarin, satires mocking Philippe exhibit no desire for retribution. For example, in the *Mazarinades* it is demanded that 'both one testicle and the other' should be cut from the body of 'poor Jules', making him 'no longer either a woman or a man'.<sup>98</sup> The punishment itself serves only to reiterate the picture of Mazarin that has been created: castration in this case is emasculating but not effeminising, and leaves behind a 'freak' that is neither truly male nor female but which, prior to castration, fulfilled the sexual roles of both.<sup>99</sup> Mazarin's disordered body is emblematic of the violent political disorder he is held responsible for; he literally embodies the complete disruption of moral and social order.<sup>100</sup> Philippe's body by contrast, is seen only as a source of bawdy amusement; though he transgresses, he does not subvert the social order.

### **Satire and maintaining the Social Hierarchy:**

Through its carnivalesque grotesquery, satire seeks to re-establish a balance that has been broken through some kind of transgression; by hyperbolic display of sexual deviance the

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<sup>96</sup> *Mazarinade*, p. 109

<sup>97</sup> J. Merrick, 'The Cardinal and the Queen: Sexual and Political Disorders in the *Mazarinades*', *French Historical Studies* 18.3, (1994), pp. 680-81

<sup>98</sup> *La Mazarinade*, translation in Merrick, 'The Cardinal and the Queen', p. 692

<sup>99</sup> Merrick, 'The Cardinal and the Queen', p. 686

<sup>100</sup> Seifert, 'Eroticizing the Fronde', p. 24

'norm' is thereby defined in direct contrast and the social order can be restored.<sup>101</sup> This can be seen in the sexually explicit *Mazarinades*, which seek to represent and combat the political disorder caused by Cardinal Mazarin through their depictions of him as a perpetrator of every kind of sexual deviance imaginable. However, one cannot see this desperation to restore a disrupted social order within the satires concerning Philippe during the later seventeenth century. Indeed, in several that contrast his sexual preferences' with his brother's, it would seem that they set out to merely reaffirm a social hierarchy rather than restore one that has collapsed. For example:

'When Louis took the front/ He left the backside/ He abandoned that part/ To the lot of Monsieur/ His brother his brother his brother'<sup>102</sup>

This satire clearly sets out more than one hierarchy; as Seifert observes the 'backside', and so by implication 'sodomitical' sexual desire, is portrayed as subordinate and inferior to heterosexual interactions.<sup>103</sup> At the same time however, it sets out a social hierarchy: just as Philippe's sexual tastes are inferior to the king's, so is his political position. His sexual transgressions and deviance, therefore, do not carry the same meaning as Mazarin's offenses, which were depicted as the root causes of political disorder and violence within the state due to his position of authority within it. Although he transgresses sexually, Philippe does not create subversion and disorder - quite the opposite in fact. The comparison between him and Louis serves only to legitimise the 'superior' different-sex sexual desires of the king and to reaffirm the normative 'heterosexual' masculinity that he embodied.<sup>104</sup> This comparison of Louis XIV and Philippe was a common theme for satires, for example one stated that 'Love in different ways/ Ignited two brothers with its flames/ One sighed for the Ladies/ The other loved only

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>102</sup> *Maurepas* 5.75, translation in Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 47

<sup>103</sup> Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 47

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

boys . . .'<sup>105</sup> Once again, Louis' sexual desires are placed in direct contrast to Philippe's. There is, however, no obvious condemnation of the latter, and as Seifert remarks, homosexual inclinations are not made 'overtly abject' through the comparison with heterosexual desire and sex acts.<sup>106</sup>

### **Gender Transgression in Satire:**

The satires did not just concentrate on Philippe's passion for men; his cross-dressing and effeminacy is also explicitly mentioned in a satirical song illustrating a surreal parody of the nativity scene:

'Well doused with perfume, Monsieur did not miss out appearing in the stable decked out in new delights; he was dressed up fully as a strumpet, and he had no devotion (don don) on that day (lala) other than for the donkey's cock.'<sup>107</sup>

While this satire clearly paints Philippe as a figure for ridicule, it is hard to detect any real sense of moral outrage within it.<sup>108</sup> By dressing as a 'strumpet' he clearly transgresses traditional gender boundaries, and his devotion for the 'donkey's cock' alludes none too subtly to his sexual preferences for males. Yet despite this, and the religious transgression he commits in transferring his devotion from its rightful object (the birth of Christ) to the bawdier elements of the scene, there seems little in the way of condemnation: the satire is intended to mock for amusement. This is particularly poignant when compared to satires from earlier periods, such as Agrippa d'Aubigne's *Tragiques* (1616) which mocked the cross-dressing and effeminacy of Henri III.<sup>109</sup> In many ways the two men are comparable; both were royal, both known for of excessive effeminacy thought to have been induced by overbearing mothers, and both had a

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<sup>105</sup>BN, Ms, *Fonds Français* 12643, folio 222, translation in Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 46

<sup>106</sup> Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 47

<sup>107</sup> *Maurepas* 9.162, translation in Hammond, *Gossip, Sexuality and Scandal in France*, p. 103

<sup>108</sup> Hammond, *Gossip, Sexuality and Scandal in France*, p.104

<sup>109</sup> Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 56

sexual preference for men.<sup>110</sup> However, Henri III's behaviour is depicted as dangerously subversive, while Philippe's is not. I would argue that this rests partially again on the social hierarchy that both existed in; while Philippe did indeed possess a 'royal' body, the body of Henri III as king was representative of the state of the nation in a way that Philippe's was not. The transgressive effeminacy of Henri therefore subverted the natural order of rule; women were seen as too 'fickle' to be capable of government and therefore, by succumbing to his effeminate desires (a womanly act in itself), he proved himself unfit for kingship.<sup>111</sup> This was exacerbated by the fact that his reign was a time of considerable religious and political strife. As Seifert remarks it is during such times of violent social and political upheaval that the erotic is evoked as a means of combating this disorder, due to its necessary connection with the 'transgression of prohibitions regulating the uses of violence'.<sup>112</sup>

Seifert also describes the uneasy balance between fascination and hostility towards sodomy in the satires of the later seventeenth century as a display of 'phobic enchantment' in which, 'repugnance and fascination are the twin poles of a process in which a *political* imperative to reject and eliminate the debasing 'low' conflicts powerfully and unpredictably with a desire for this Other.'<sup>113</sup> However, the combined lack of real political imperative behind the attacks on the 'sodomites' during this period (as opposed to those against Cardinal Mazarin or Henri III) and the techniques employed such as mock imperative which both humanised and created an identification with the 'Other' of the sodomite, would suggest that there was more fascination than phobia.

### **The 'preserve of the elite'?**

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<sup>110</sup> K. Crawford., 'Love, Sodomy and Scandal: Controlling the Sexual Reputation of Henry III', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 12.4 (2003), p. 513

<sup>111</sup> Harris, *Hidden Agendas*, p. 56

<sup>112</sup> Seifert, 'Eroticizing the Fronde', p. 22

<sup>113</sup> Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 45

As previously discussed, there exists a general consensus in both contemporary sources and modern scholarship that same-sex sexual practices were the preserve of the elite. Evidence for this attitude can be found in the satires of the *Chansonnier Maurepas*, which claim to sing about 'what is being done at Court' and observe that the nobles 'compose songs about women' but 'love boys'<sup>114</sup> These claims are supported by those of the aristocracy themselves, as Liselotte wrote to her aunt: 'it is only the common men who make love to women'.<sup>115</sup> There is a clear recognition of the discrepancy between the punishment received by commoners who were accused of sodomy, and the elite who had a reputation for the 'vice'. For example, a satire referring to the burning of the bourgeois Jacques Chausson in 1661 for the crime of sodomy (he was accused of having raped a young nobleman) expressed outrage that another 'sodomite', the aristocratic Guitaut de Comminges had not suffered the same fate.<sup>116</sup> It questions:

'Great Gods! Where is your justice? Chausson is going to perish by fire; and Guitaut for the same vice has earned the Cordon bleu of the order of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>117</sup>

Although it is undeniable that there was a divide between the treatment of the aristocratic and the lower and middle classes with regards to punishment for sodomy, it should be pointed out that executions for sodomy were sporadic and the charge often combined other crimes such as thievery or, in the case of Chausson, rape of a nobleman.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, while Seifert argues that this satire is openly hostile towards sodomy and calls for the execution of both culprits, this is not the only possible interpretation: it could also imply that neither should 'perish by fire', and certainly some poetry sympathetic to Chausson emerged around the time.<sup>119</sup> It is also possible that the discrepancy we see between the opinions of elites and non-elites comes partly

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<sup>114</sup> *Maurepas*, 5.367, translation in Hammond, *Gossip, Scandal and Sexuality*, p. 60

<sup>115</sup> La Princesse Palatine, *The Letters of Madame*, p. 78

<sup>116</sup> Hammond, *Gossip, Sexuality and Scandal in France*, p. 65

<sup>117</sup> *Maurepas*, 23.369, translation in Hammond, *Gossip, Scandal and Sexuality*, p. 66

<sup>118</sup> J. Merrick, 'Chaussons in the Streets: Sodomy in Seventeenth-Century Paris', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 15(2) (2005), p. 168

<sup>119</sup> Seifert, 'Masculinity and Satires of "Sodomites"', p. 42

from the evidence we have for each; information concerning non-elites is sourced primarily from police-records and is therefore based on prosecutions, whereas the vast number of court *mémoires* and personal letters left behind by the French nobles allow for a more intimate view of their opinions and concerns.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, rather than only displaying a hostile or satirical attitude to homosexual behaviour, it is known that as early as the sixteenth century 'morally-neutral' phrases such as *amour des mâles* or *amour masculine* were used outside of the court setting, suggesting that tolerant conceptions of male same-sex desire were not in fact confined to the elite.<sup>121</sup> The rigid boundaries that historians set between the 'aristocracy' and the 'commoners' should therefore be reconsidered.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, while it is undeniable that the satires of the later seventeenth century treat both gender and sexual transgressions (sodomy included) with hostility, the level to which this hostility is explicit varies. Although Philippe's sexual preferences for men, his excessive devotion to his male favourites and his cross-dressing habits are frequently ridiculed, it is clear that this mockery does not betray a deeper anxiety about the disorder this may cause to society, but rather seeks to define a new elite masculinity that was emerging towards the end of the seventeenth century. This can be seen in the frequent comparisons between the tastes of Philippe and Louis XIV, which see the heterosexual desires and masculine 'norm' of the latter portrayed as superior to the homoeroticism and effeminacy of the former, but do not suggest that this norm is any way threatened or subverted through Philippe's transgressions: the social and political hierarchy is maintained. It is also clear that, when compared to the sexually explicit *Mazarinades* or the satirical polemic directed at Henri III, the satires concerning

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<sup>120</sup> Merrick, 'Chaussons in the Streets', p. 167

<sup>121</sup> C. Denton, 'The Brotherhood: Male Same-Sex Love among the Early Modern Court Nobility' (2014) <<https://cour-de-france.fr/article3332.html?lang=fr>> [accessed 11th April 2018]

Philippe's transgression should be seen as humorous 'satire for satires sake', as opposed to political pornography which indicated disorder of the state through the transgressing body of the satire's subject. Ultimately, in the relatively stable political climate of the later seventeenth century, sexual and gender-related transgression was no longer synonymous with subversion of the political order, and so while they were clearly still targeted in satire, the attacks did not carry the same weight as the vicious polemics of the earlier decades. Finally, although there was clearly some discrepancy between the ways that these transgressions were treated by the elites and 'commoners', it is worth redressing the strict boundaries that historians have used to separate the two; this divide has arisen largely from a lack of evidence detailing the personal thoughts and feelings of those who were not part of the nobility, and a closer inspection of the evidence we do possess reveals a more nuanced perspective than is traditionally portrayed.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this dissertation has shown that the discourse surrounding gender and sexual transgression in seventeenth century France was complex and many-faceted. As this case-study of Philippe shows, neither the stereotype of a homophobic and persecutory society nor of a Renaissance inspired 'gay-utopia' provide a nuanced enough picture of the reality; in many cases both tolerance and hostility existed side by side.

In the first chapter it was demonstrated that, despite an official policy of persecution by the Church, there could be found considerable 'enlightened' tolerance for both sexual and gender transgression among the court elite. Both Philippe's sexual and gender transgressions, rather than being reprimanded, were utilised opportunistically by those around him to keep him in his place below Louis and so to prevent any threat to the social order.

During the second chapter it was shown that, by the eighteenth century, sodomy had become associated with effeminacy, weakness and a lack of bravery (hence Voltaire's surprise when considering Philippe's military valour). However, as Hosford shows, these aspects of Philippe's character were considered perfectly reconcilable due to the existence of the 'warrior sodomite' figure, which had not yet been fully replaced by the 'effeminate sodomite'. Furthermore, it was argued that when embodying a traditionally 'masculine' figure - that of the victorious warrior - Philippe came closer to subversion of the social hierarchy than at any other time, for it was as a successful military commander that he threatened to 'outshine' the Sun King.

Through an investigation of satirical material from the later seventeenth century, the third chapter demonstrated that by this period both gender and sexual transgression were no longer viewed as signifiers of political subversion and cosmic disorder, as they had been in the earlier *Mazarinades* or critiques of Henri III., but rather existed in 'satire for satire's sake' which could even be used to reaffirm existing hierarchies. Finally, it was proposed that the

rigid boundaries imposed between elite and non-elite opinions of such transgressions should be reconsidered, as the discrepancy between the opinions of both are arguably not so stark as has been traditionally considered.

Obviously the study of one man, and particularly of such a privileged one as the king's brother, cannot provide us with an accurate picture of the experiences or thoughts of all early modern people in regards to gender or sexuality. However, I believe that a study of Philippe I d'Orleans has revealed that the boundaries around masculinity and male sexuality could, in certain circumstances, be more fluid than a traditional view of the 'repressive' seventeenth century allows, and were often used opportunistically. Most importantly, I believe it has provided strong evidence for Joseph Harris' assertion that transgression is not synonymous with subversion; in the case of Philippe, his transgression of masculine gender and sexual expectations was actually used by his brother Louis XIV and others to reaffirm the social and political order rather than subverting it in a manner comparable to the carnivalesque. On closer inspection, the so-called 'repressive' and 'homophobic' second half of the seventeenth century can be seen as a time of remarkable tolerance for same-sex activity among the elite, due perhaps in part to the resurgence in classical culture of the Renaissance; it was only when such sexual transgressions transformed into something potentially subversive, as in the case of the 1682 *confrérie*, that they were rebuked.

Clearly further research is required in a field which has for so long suffered under the homophobia or prejudices of modern historians and has only truly become an area of serious academic interest over the course of the last half-century. I believe however, that through case-studies of individuals such as Philippe who seem at first to sit outside traditional gender or sexual norms, we can gain a greater insight into the surprising complexity of the dynamics surrounding transgression and subversion in Early Modern France.

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