REVIEW ARTICLE

SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN ANCIENT GREECE*

During the last two decades historians, anthropologists, feminists, sociologists, and literary critics have increasingly turned their attention to a variety of issues which earlier mainstream scholarship had considered of only marginal interest. Among these issues few have attracted as much attention as those relating to the family, sex, and the social construction of gender. In the historical disciplines a veritable flood of scholarship on these topics has both brought to light important new primary sources and also suggested a number of methodological and theoretical perspectives for their evaluation. These perspectives are diverse enough to defy a general characterization, but one substantial group of them might fit comfortably within the rubric of what is sometimes called the "New Cultural History." In the introduction to an influential collection bearing this name, L. Hunt characterizes such scholarship as rejecting the kind of theoretical frameworks provided by sociology and social theory: "Now . . . the influential disciplines are anthropology and literary theory, fields in which social explanation is not taken for granted."[1]

Ancient history and classics have not remained untouched by these developments. Indeed, in recent years our understanding of Greek and Roman society has been greatly enriched by the wide variety of approaches which scholars have brought to the study of the family and sexuality in the ancient world. While some of these scholars have remained within the methodological domain of classical philology (e.g., Dover), others have fruitfully adopted the models and methods of contemporary sociology, demography, and social history (e.g., Hopkins, Saller, Shaw, Frier). Another group, however, seems to fall within the theoretical orientation described by Hunt above, where anthropology and literary theory are paired to generate a historiography which approaches society as a text to be read and interpreted.[2] This Geertzian orientation to social phenomena has proved particularly

**Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World.* Edited by DAVID M. HALPERIN, †JOHN J. WINKLER, and FROMA I. ZEITLIN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. Pp. xix + 526. $59.50.

The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece. By †JOHN J. WINKLER. The New Ancient World Series. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. Pp. xii + 269; frontispiece in text. $45.00 (cloth), $14.95 (paper).

One Hundred Years of Homosexuality, and Other Essays on Greek Love. By DAVID M. HALPERIN. The New Ancient World Series. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. Pp. x + 230; frontispiece, 2 ills. in text. $39.50 (cloth), $13.95 (paper).

1. L. Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 10–11. I am not suggesting that this characterization of sociology and social theory is correct; figures like Weber, Goffman, Bourdieu, and Giddens can hardly fairly be described as taking social explanation for granted.

2. I do not mean to include here all scholars whose work is informed by anthropology. I refer specifically to the kind of interpretative anthropological/literary methodology described immediately below. Scholars like Humphreys, Patterson, Hunter, Just, Foxhall (and myself) use anthropology within a framework largely defined by social historical methods.

convenient in Greek history, where most of the available sources are, in one sense or another, literary. Thus, a number of the leading figures in the study of women, sexuality, and the family in ancient Greece are not historians, but literary scholars who have based their "readings" of classical culture upon key literary texts (e.g., Zeitlin, Lefkowitz, Foley). Now, despite being explicitly located under a Foucauldian theoretical aegis, a group of important new books on ancient Greek sexuality has appeared which also manifest the anthropological/literary orientation just described.[3] Accordingly, the discussion which follows will consider the common methodological and historiographical underpinnings of these works in addition to treating their interpretations of specific aspects of culture and society in the ancient world.

J. Winkler's *The Constraints of Desire* brings together a number of essays published over the last decade, all dealing with various aspects of ancient sexuality and the social construction of gender. The collection is eclectic. Four chapters focus upon individual authors (Homer, Sappho, Longus, and Artemidorus), while three others treat erotic magic in the corpus of magical papyri, women's religious festivals, and the regulation of homoerotic conduct in classical Athens. Taken together these essays represent an impressive achievement which will be immensely valuable to classical scholars in a variety of areas. Indeed, this is a work of considerable originality whose innovative methods and often radically new conclusions will help to shape continuing debate in this area. However, precisely because of its outstanding qualities it deserves serious critical engagement of its ideas rather than a mere descriptive recital of its virtues. The discussion which follows should be taken in this light, not as seeking to detract from its intellectual stature, but rather as encouraging classicists and ancient historians to read it as an important work which challenges many of the accustomed ways in which they have studied and described classical antiquity.

Although composed of previously published essays, *The Constraints of Desire* is structured as a coherent account of "The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in the Ancient World," divided into three parts: "Andres," "Reading against the Grain," and "Gunaikes." These chapters do not, however, furnish a comprehensive account of men, women, sexuality, or gender in ancient Greece, nor were they intended to do so.[4] Indeed, one of the purposes of the book is clearly to challenge the kind of scholarship which constructs conventional diachronic or synchronic accounts of social institutions.[5] Instead, what unites these essays which range over more than a millennium and across the Mediterranean are certain methodological and theoretical starting points which W. sets out in his introduction. As to methods, he locates his study within two distinct anthropological contexts. The first of these, which largely defines the general approach, involves feminist anthropology which applies social construction theory to the study of gender. This orientation, with its predisposition to question the gendered ideology which shapes ancient texts, "can

3. Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin term the approach "cultural poetics," making clear the dual orientation discussed here.

4. See the final section of the introduction, "The Shape of This Book," *Constraints*, pp. 10–13.

5. This is one of the markers of the kind of influence of contemporary literary theory noted by Hunt in the passage discussed above. All three works share this disposition.

elicit from those texts and pictures a richer and more complex understanding of sex and gender."[6] The second (and complementary) anthropological orientation draws upon contemporary Mediterranean social anthropology as a comparative framework whose "deep premises (protocols) of social life . . . can be used to frame and illuminate ancient texts, bringing out their unspoken assumptions."[7]

W.'s account of the ways in which anthropology and feminist theory can assist the ancient historian exemplifies the methodological premises which define a substantial body of recent work on ancient Greece and Rome. It is unfortunate, however, that he explicitly declines to articulate these premises in a systematic way.[8] What is required, it seems to me, is a thorough account of the way in which particular anthropological theories provide a coherent framework for the study of the norms, ideology, and social practices of specific societies. After all, given the chaotic state of contemporary anthropological theory, it is not as if the issue were self-evident. W.'s bibliography contains references to works like Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* but there is no discussion of whether it is the theoretical model of the "habitus" or some other theory which informs W.'s conceptualization of social practices. Likewise, there is a general nod to the way in which feminist anthropologists have treated the cultural construction of gender, but no indication of where W. stands in regard to the many fundamental controversies which define this field. One searches the bibliography and text in vain for points of orientation like the seminal work of figures like Ortner, Whitehead, Strathern, Godelier, or Herdt.[9] If classicists and ancient historians are going to reshape the study of ancient society through the application of anthropological models and methods, it behooves us to give a coherent account of the theoretical positions we adopt. Simply saying that one is writing an "anthropology" of sex and gender is not enough. Rather one must orient oneself to one of the many available anthropological approaches to such matters and give a reasoned account of what justifies applying this particular method in historical research.

The essays which make up *The Constraints of Desire* are also informed by a cumulative argument which insists upon the centrality of dominance and submission, defined by phallic penetration, in Greek understandings of sexual behavior. This understanding forms the basis of sexual and social identity in the zero-sum competition for honor which defined Greek public life. This ideology accorded a place to femininity as the submissive and inferior complement to aggressive masculinity. The main themes of this argument are, of course, familiar in that they constitute the central thesis of Dover's *Greek Homosexuality.* In the last three chapters, however, W.'s argument attempts to provide a different focus upon this sexual ideology by recovering Greek women's perspectives on this male definition of their cultural world. Here, relying primarily upon studies of Sappho and Homer's Penelope, W. develops a view of Greek women who see themselves as far more central to the sustenance of the social order than public male discourse

6. *Constraints,* p. 3.
7. Ibid., p. 10.
8. Ibid.
9. I mention these names because their work has been particularly influential in shaping my own work. One could, of course, compile a completely different list, but that is just my point.

might like to admit. This is perhaps the most original part of his general argument, though, as will appear below, one may question the applicability of his analysis of Sappho and Homer to later periods.

The reader may be surprised that in the previous paragraph I consistently referred to "Greek" rather than Athenian, Spartan, Hellenistic, or Homeric men and women. Indeed, it is one of the methodological challenges posed by W.'s study that his, to use Hunt's term, anthropological/literary theoretical approach permits him to read all of Greek antiquity as a many-faceted series of texts which may be interpreted together. Thus, the "best witness" to the ideology of dominance and submission across all of Greek antiquity is Artemidorus, whose "theory and practice of interpretation uniquely qualify him as a witness to common conceptions because he sees his social role as one of letting the social meanings held by his clients speak for themselves."[10] Thus, Artemidorus' text provides the "erotic protocols" (androcentrism, phallocentrism, and invasion) which chapter 3 applies to the analysis of homoeroticism in classical Athens.

By the standards of traditional scholarship the use of Artemidorus as the authoritative source "about the perceived public meanings of sexual activity" in the ancient world,[11] rather than merely in the particular period and societies in which he lived, may seem perplexing. However, the implicit methodological challenge to traditional approaches is clearly quite deliberate. For Artemidorus is the best source, because his "empirical stance allows us to grasp a general semantics of sex in the ancient world usually obscured by the tendentious treatment of moralists."[12] These moralists include figures like Plato and Aristotle, and Artemidorus is taken to provide a more accurate account of "real lives"[13] in classical Athens than they do. Similarly, passages from Seneca, Dio Chrysostom, Claudius Aelianus, and Philo are read against Plato's views on "unnatural" sexuality to reveal that in the discourse of the ancient world "nature" actually turns out to mean "culture."[14] Traditional scholarship might have expected Plato's account to be measured against Aeschines' use of παρὰ φύσιν in his denunciation of Timarchus, or against similar usages in Aristotle and Hyperides. These passages are not unknown to W., whose grasp of the full range of ancient sources is exemplary.[15] Instead, he is quite deliberately revising canons of interpretation and historical method to produce an alternative account of the ancient Mediterranean world. Again, however, W. provides no reasoned account of why the dreams of Artemidorus' clients can illuminate the way in which Athenians perceived sexual deviance some six centuries earlier. Of course there are similarities and cultural continuities throughout antiquity and beyond, but W.'s use of such evidence suggests that there was neither significant cultural variation among Mediterranean communities nor significant cultural changes over more than a millennium. In short, if one is going to discredit the evidence of contemporaries because they are

10. *Constraints*, p. 11.
11. Ibid., pp. 42–43.
12. Ibid., p. 43.
13. Ibid., p. 20.
14. Ibid., pp. 22–23.
15. Apart from Aeschines, these passages are discussed in a later chapter (pp. 61, 69) where they are interpreted in light of the pattern argued for through the reading of Artemidorus, that is, that normative references to "nature" should really be read as meaning "culture."

"moralists" in favor of an "empiricist" of a different locale and age, this would seem to me to require some justification. Can the testimony of Aristotle and the Hippocratic circles really be so easily dismissed?

A glance at the structure of the "cumulative argument" described above confirms the radical quality of this methodological stance. Chapter 3, "Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men's Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens," builds upon the delineation of Artemidorus' erotic protocols in providing an original account of the political implications of the ideology of dominance and submission in the competition for honor, prestige, and power in Athens. Next, in "The Constraints of Desire: Erotic Magical Spells," an extremely subtle reading of a second-century physiognomist, magical papyri, and a terracotta statuette of a female body pierced by thirteen nails leads to an unlocking of fantasy, violence, dark passion, and misogyny which underlie erotic desire in the ancient Mediterranean world.[16] Then, the argument about the responses of women to the aggressive phallocentric ideology which relegated them to a social role defined by exclusion, submission, and inferiority is built around a reading of three key texts which again extend over nearly a thousand years of antiquity: *Daphnis and Chloe,* the *Odyssey,* and the poems of Sappho. The view developed there is supplemented by an interpretation of Athenian women's festivals in the classical period. Again, the ideological system on which the social construction of gender is based is taken to remain constant through the four eras and societies which these texts and institutions represent. Penelope's management of Odysseus' homecoming may be read together with Sappho's sexual subjectivity and the role of women in Athenian religion to reveal women's "more comprehensive understanding" of men and their relation to women.[17] Certainly there are continuities in values between whatever society Homer was portraying and the classical period, but there were also important differences. In fact, many scholars have suggested important shifts in the attitudes toward and status of women from the Homeric to the classical worlds. However, the methodological stance that regards social history as a form of "cultural poetics" tends to obscure the need for confronting such issues.[18]

To put all of this another way, the reader of *The Constraints of Desire* is faced with a fundamental choice. He or she may take the book as a series of discrete essays on a variety of loosely related topics all pertaining in one way or another to conceptualizations of sexuality in various ancient societies. This approach would certainly not be unrewarding. The essays on Penelope and *Daphnis and Chloe* are masterpieces of literary interpretative skill and sensitivity, and the other chapters all reward careful reading of their complex, subtle, and stimulating arguments. On the other hand, the reader may, as I have done, try to make sense of the book as a whole, of the general argument to which W. returns at a number of points in the text. From this view the book is far more problematic, but also far more challenging. In dismissing the canons according to which ancient historians divide up classical antiquity into a discrete set of periods, regions, and societies, each with its

16. W.'s claims are not directed at any particular society, but rather he repeatedly refers to the "Mediterranean" context of his argument. See, e.g., pp. 72–74, 89, 97.

17. *Constraints,* p. 209.

18. For "cultural poetics" see the introduction of Halperin, Winkler, Zeitlin, *Before Sexuality,* discussed below.

appropriate sources, W. invites us to investigate the underlying conceptual and ideological continuities in the ancient Mediterranean world. As one who relies heavily upon anthropology in general and Mediterranean anthropology in particular, I am deeply sympathetic to some aspects of his approach, but equally skeptical about others. In showing how one can intelligently detach a body of texts from their particular historical contexts and read them against one another to construct a history of ancient *mentalités* and representations concerning sex and gender, W. forces us to examine and defend our own historical assumptions, methodologies, and practices. This, as W.'s work can be taken to suggest, is the real task of a "New Cultural History": not to generate new orthodoxies to replace the old, but rather to challenge the interpretative and methodological assumptions upon which such orthodoxies too comfortably rest.

D. Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* appears in the same series as *The Constraints of Desire,* a series entitled, appropriately enough, "The New Ancient World." H. shares many of W.'s theses about ancient sexuality, but the scope and methods of his study are radically different. If W.'s approach is one of literary anthropology, H.'s approach to "cultural poetics" is philosophical and conceptual. Indeed, like all of his work, this book is rich, dense, always intelligent, and tightly argued. While H., like W., supports the view that Athenian homoeroticism structures relations according to patterns of domination and submission, activity, and passivity, he grounds this view in an argument of greater conceptual depth and rigor. Whereas W. primarily appeals to general anthropological considerations about the construction of gender, and more particularly to certain Mediterranean cultural "protocols" revealed by key texts like Artemidorus, H. builds upon a powerful and carefully constructed argument about the ways in which sex and sexuality have been and should be conceptualized. Moreover, the argument aims at elucidating the classical period and relies upon evidence from classical Athenian sources to do so. Further, his discussion is explicitly phrased as a defense and elaboration of the views of M. Foucault as developed in the three volumes of his *History of Sexuality*.

H.'s book also consists of essays, nearly all of which have been published elsewhere.[19] The first half of the book consists of two papers and an interview which develop the Foucauldian position indicated above. The bulk of the second part applies this position to the social institution of Athenian male prostitution and to the philosophical world of Plato's *Symposium*. Taken together these chapters do not amount to a comprehensive treatment of homoeroticism in classical Athens,[20] but this collection of H.'s essays nonetheless represents the most original and important sustained consideration of aspects of Athenian paederasty since Dover's pathbreaking *Greek Homosexuality*.

Dover's influence, however, is felt throughout this volume, as it also is in *The Constraints of Desire*. While both H. and W. credit Foucault within having laid the theoretical groundwork for their central theses, this does not do justice to Dover's pervasive influence on both works. A good deal of the conceptual vocabulary

19. The new work is the short chapter on heroic friendship in the *Iliad*, Gilgamesh, and the Books of Samuel.

20. As noted above, H. tacitly eschews W.'s method of encompassing all of Greek antiquity within his argument.

(i.e., the rejection of the terms "sexuality" and "homosexuality") may be Foucauldian, but the basic schema for understanding sexual relations in terms of roles of domination and submission, activity and passivity, is already fully developed by Dover. In fact, the central achievement of Dover's book largely consists in having taught us to understand paederasty in those terms. Indeed, it is on Dover's framework that Foucault heavily relies throughout the second volume of the *History of Sexuality,*[21] and neither Foucault, H., nor W. appears to me to have gone beyond Dover in portraying the dynamics of Athenian paederasty. They have, of course explored a number of other important topics which Dover neglected, but here too his intellectual influence is clearly felt.[22]

H. opens the collection with his well-known and controversial essay, "One Hundred Years of Homosexuality." Here, following the lead of the first volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality,* he argues that the very notions of "sexuality," "homosexuality," and "heterosexuality" are the product of discursive, scientific, and institutional practices peculiar to nineteenth-century Europe. Hence, in applying such constructs to the ancient world (or any other historical context) we are imposing a particular view of sex and sexual relations which is utterly alien to it. H.'s position on this issue has generated considerable controversy. He has lectured widely on the subject and several different versions of this paper have been published over the past six years. Given that many scholars, including Dover and Boswell, have responded at length to these views, I see little point on dwelling on the issue here.[23] Certainly, it is useful to have the fullest version of this important paper which has served to orient debate in this area. The inclusion of the text of an interview elaborating some of its central ideas (chap. 2) helps to clarify and underscore some of the essential features of H.'s claims and the controversy which they have provoked.

Chapter 3 develops H.'s views on the nature of Greek paederasty by comparing two major treatments of the topic, both of which start from the premise that ancient paederasty was fundamentally different from modern homosexuality. The first view is that of Patzer, who argues that it is the role of paederasty as a form of male initiation which produces the unique practices which distinguish it from the kinds of sexual relations connoted by "homosexuality."[24] H. carefully examines the methods and evidence by which Patzer supports this innovative thesis,

21. H. (*One Hundred,* pp. 5–8) discusses the relation between Foucault and Dover, but does not credit Dover with the conceptual breakthrough and systematic treatment which constituted Foucault's achievement. This, as in W., strikes me as odd, because both W. and H. repeatedly affirm the absolutely central importance of the conceptualization of paederasty not in our terms, but according to notions of domination and submission, activity and passivity. Though this is not one of the four theses which H. assigns to Dover's credit (*One Hundred,* p. 5), it is nonetheless Dover who first fully developed this argument and Foucault and others who followed and elaborated it.

22. H. (*One Hundred,* p. 5) claims that I have tried to "refute" Dover's thesis in my paper "Law, Society, and Homosexuality in Classical Athens," *P & P* 117 (1987): 3–21. This misstates my position, which tries to build upon Dover's analysis by problematizing some of the important issues it raises concerning patterns of social control and the nature of norms, values, and attitudes concerning sexuality in a complex society like that of classical Athens.

23. See J. Boswell, "Revolutions, Universals, and Sex Categories," in *Homosexuality: Sacrilege, Vision, Politics,* ed. R. Boyers and G. Steiner (Saratoga Springs, 1982), pp. 89–113; and Dover, *JHS* 94 (1984): 239–40.

24. H. Patzer, *Die griechische Knabenliebe* (Wiesbaden, 1982). This view of paederasty and male initiation has been adopted by a number of other scholars. See, for example, J. Bremmer, "An Enigmatic Indo-European Rite: Paederasty," *Arethusa* (1980): 279–98. Bremmer's methods and use of evidence are

and in a model of devastatingly lucid analysis exposes the fundamental weaknesses which underlie Patzer's argument. Particularly astute is the discussion in which he demonstrates that Patzer has misappropriated and misapplied anthropological evidence and methods to support his position.[25] In firmly rejecting the methodological excesses on which the initiatory thesis is constructed, H. has rendered an important service to classical studies in this area, and his treatment is of fundamental importance for any scholars attracted to such explanations of Athenian social practices.

The second part of chapter 3 takes up Foucault's treatment of Greek paederasty. Scholars seeking a concise statement of the import of Foucault's study of Greek and Roman sexuality would be well advised to turn to H.'s clear and nuanced discussion. One of the most interesting aspects of this discussion is H.'s exposition of Foucault's comparison of Greek and modern conceptions of morality. Noting that too many classical scholars have viewed morality as "a set of values and rules of conduct that are prescribed for individuals and groups by various agencies of authority in society," H. argues that such an orientation places too much emphasis on the content, as opposed to the discursive structures, of a moral system.[26] Now, this general critique of the conceptualization of moral system is by no means original to Foucault. Bourdieu, for example, had developed a similar analysis well before Foucault's efforts.[27] However, Foucault's application of this theory to Greek morality is, indeed, highly original. According to H., Foucault shows that Greek morality knows no code like the Decalogue, but relies instead upon a few simple precepts: "respect the laws and customs of the country; try not to offend the gods; and don't violate the dictates of your own nature."[28] This approach leaves the individual a great deal of freedom, and constraint largely takes the form of self-imposed regulation. Thus, in the sexual sphere Greek morality does not prohibit: "Instead, the ethic governing the usage of sexual pleasures takes the form of a calculated economy of sexual spending . . . Sexual morality is not part of an attempt to normalize populations. . . . Greek morality, Foucault concludes, does not justify and internalize interdictions: it stylizes freedom."[29]

This view of Greek society underlies H.'s own treatment of homoeroticism in later chapters, yet it seems to leave a variety of questions unanswered. Although the notion of a voluntary sphere of "morally unrestricted pleasures"[30] does indeed illuminate many aspects of Athenian sexual ideology, that ideology is not free from prohibition: the abhorrence of incest and of those men who find pleasure and/or gain in passive sexual submission to other males are two of the clearest examples of this. Further, the ideology of "morally unrestricted pleasures" does not

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so patently defective that his conclusions do not merit serious consideration. For a full consideration of the state of the evidence, see Dover, "Greek Homosexuality and Initiation," in his *The Greeks and Their Legacy* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 115–34.

25. *One Hundred*, pp. 60–61.

26. Ibid., p. 64.

27. See, for example, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977); E. Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places* (New York, 1963); A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (London, 1977); and J. Comaroff and S. Roberts, *Rules and Processes* (Chicago, 1981).

28. *One Hundred*, p. 68.

29. Ibid., p. 69.

30. Ibid., p. 68.

extend uniformly throughout society. Foucault is right to challenge the code- and content-oriented view of morality, but he is wrong to homogenize the discursive construction of moral orientations. Antidemocratic theorists in Athens consistently attack the moral laxity of a democratic society, and Isocrates, Aristotle, and Plato all argue at length for a strict regulation of sexuality in an ideal state.[31] More important, Foucault ignores the social practices connected to the competition for honor and prestige in an agonistic society and the way in which such practices collectively constitute the kind of system of social control that has been described in detail by Mediterranean social anthropologists.[32] Such a system certainly does operate to normalize the female part of the population, and also, through the operation of the politics of reputation as it is linked to the social construction of gender, the male citizens as well. As numerous sources indicate, widespread normative expectations held that women who left the house too often were regarded as morally suspect, and men who remained at home too much were considered effeminate. This is but one example of the normalizing power of culturally elaborated gender roles articulated through the politics of reputation. Similar normative expectations and cultural sanctions operated to socialize men to display the kind of aggressive sexuality which the cultural "protocols" described by W. and H. required.

The two final chapters of *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* take up individual topics within the theoretical framework elaborated in part 1. We have long needed an authoritative study of prostitution in classical Athens, and in chapter 5, "The Democratic Body," H. provides it (though primarily focusing on male prostitution). His treatment relates prostitution to Athenian democratic politics and ideology in an original and nuanced manner. Subsequent studies of this important topic will largely define themselves in terms of H.'s ground-breaking treatment. The final chapter, "Why is Diotima a Woman?" builds upon H.'s other published work on Platonic eros and is of similarly high quality. In seeking to answer the much discussed question of why Plato has Socrates attribute his erotic theory to a female teacher it manifests the best features of H.'s scholarship: a complete command of the vast secondary literature and a penetrating and densely textured analysis of the text leading to a provocative, persuasive, and highly original interpretation of Plato's intention. Regardless of how one views H.'s resolution of the question of Diotima, the reader's appreciation of the *Symposium* and of Platonic eros will be greatly enriched through H.'s insight. It is a pity that the collection does not include his equally important study of "erotic reciprocity" in Plato to complement this essay.

Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World, edited by Halperin, Winkler, and F. Zeitlin, nicely complements the enterprise of the two works discussed above. This collection of fifteen articles, nearly all of which have been published elsewhere over the past decade, brings together the work of some of the most distinguished and innovative historians and cultural critics of antiquity who have written about issues of gender and erotic experience.

31. See Cohen, *Law, Society, and Sexuality: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1991), chap. 9.

32. Cohen, *Law, Society,* chaps. 3, 6–7.

The collection is wide-ranging both in time and subject matter, from archaic Greece to Christian late antiquity, from detailed analyses of Attic vases to treatments of literary texts and of the ancient medical corpus.

Two issues concerning the title of the book deserve mention. First, the phrase "before sexuality" might imply that the entire collection adopts the Foucauldian position about the invention of sexuality discussed above. This is not the case, however, as the editors explicitly point out.[33] Some of the contributors do adopt this perspective, but many think it appropriate to talk about the ways in which ancient notions of sexuality differed from our own. Indeed, some of the authors explicitly criticize Foucault's position,[34] and others adopt positions which implicitly undermine the Foucauldian thesis. This is particularly the case with P. Brown's study of the development of a new Christian conceptualization of sexuality in the third and fourth centuries.[35]

Second, though the book is subtitled "The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World," the collection does not attempt a comprehensive or unified account of this subject. In fact, the editors describe the collection as "avowedly pluralistic, partial, and discontinuous," and liken it to the series of "different peepholes placed in the walls around a large construction site."[36] Following, then, the kind of anthropological/literary theoretical approach described by Hunt,[37] the editors have assembled a collection which ranges from Plato, Attic vases, and classical Greek myth and ritual to Artemidorus, Longus, and fourth-century Christianity. From the perspective of these "peepholes," the reader is largely left to her own devices to make out the nature of the building under construction, and the introduction could have well devoted a few pages to making explicit the nature of the methodologies and theoretical premises which they see as replacing those they disavow.[38] Given this disavowal of organizational, methodological, chronological, or conceptual unity, such a large, diverse, and wide-ranging collection is particularly difficult to review. Accordingly, I will adopt a similar method and dip into the collection at random points which seem particularly interesting or illuminating.[39]

Three of the essays deal with the social construction of female gender roles as seen through the Greek scientific and medical corpus.[40] One of these, A. Hanson's discussion of the depiction of women and their bodies in the Greek medical writers is a model of careful analysis based upon a clearly articulated methodology and a masterful command of the sources.[41] Hanson closely examines the way the treat-

33. *Before Sexuality*, p. 5.

34. See, e.g., Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender," pp. 411–12.

35. Discussed at length below.

36. *Before Sexuality*, pp. 4–5.

37. The editors proclaim themselves "suspicious of claims to see and comprehend the whole, any whole" (p. 4). They further explicitly disavow the periodization and developmental schemes of "traditional handbooks" (p. 18).

38. *Before Sexuality*, pp. 18–19.

39. I should note that two of the essays, by W. and H., appear in the books reviewed above, so, although they do much to enrich this volume, I will not discuss them further here.

40. Carson, chap. 5, "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire," pp. 135–69; Hanson, chap. 9, "The Medical Writer's Woman," pp. 308–38; Sissa, chap. 10, "Maidenhood without Maidenhead: The Female Body in Ancient Greece," pp. 339–64.

41. Hanson ("Medical Writers," p. 313) distinguishes herself from other recent treatments of this material (notably Rousselle and Sissa) and explicitly adopts Lloyd's view of a single developing genre of

ment of women develops from the Hippocratics to Soranus and does a good deal to clarify some of the obscurities of the medical conceptualization of the sexual responses and reproductive capacities of younger and more mature women. She shows the ways in which the changing social role of women is reflected in the development of medical conceptualizations, but emphasizes that throughout the five centuries represented by this corpus the social role of woman as mother and wife consistently underlies the medical conceptualization of her sexual nature.

G. Sissa's treatment of some of the same questions revolves around what she sees as a cultural tension captured in the dual meaning of the term παρθένος as "virgin" and "unmarried [and possibly nonvirginal] woman." Sissa's claims and methods are clearly more ambitious than those of Hanson, but her arguments are marred by an underlying conceptual confusion between the ontological and social meanings of παρθενία.[42] Moreover, there are serious problems of method and interpretation as well. Hanson, for example, convincingly demonstrates that Sissa's views on the nature of the uterus and the vaginal membrane in the earlier part of the medical corpus are not supported by the available evidence.[43] Further, Sissa supports her generalizations by means of a methodological eclecticism which at times is quite astonishing. For example, the evidence she offers to support her thesis about tests for παρθενία in "ancient Greece"[44] consists of three passages. The first is Herodotus' description of a Libyan festival, the second involves Aelian's portrayal of an ordeal for sacred virgins in Lavinium, and the third comes from Achilles Tatius' account of other ordeals at Ephesos.[45] Sissa acknowledges that such passages describe rituals which take place "far from classical Greece," but defends her analysis by arguing that they nonetheless reveal, "that a Greek male could speak of virginity as something secret."[46] This remark, however, hardly seems sufficient to explain the questionable relevance of any of these testimonia. In reality, her thesis is not supported by a single shred of evidence which has any demonstrable cultural connection to the classical period. Through the rest of the paper she continues to abstain from clearly defining the chronological and social dimensions of her inquiry, drawing on texts that range across much of the

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medical writing from the Hippocratics to Soranus, which within this area may be viewed in terms of earlier and later gynecologies.

42. See, e.g., the discussion that begins: "Is it not surprising, from our point of view, that on the one hand a girl can lose her παρθενία and continue to be called παρθένος, while the discovery of a pre-marital sexual relationship means repudiation or even death?" ("Maidenhood," p. 348).

43. She also emphasizes the importance of viewing the medical corpus not as a single homogeneous text, but rather as a tradition which develops over time.

44. "Maidenhood," p. 343.

45. Ibid., pp. 343–46.

46. Ibid., p. 346. Similarly problematic is her account of Athenian legislation pertaining to virgins. She refers to Plutarch's description of a "shockingly severe" Solonian law which provides that a father or brother can sell into slavery a παρθένος who has been seduced. The only support she adduces for the authenticity of this legislation is Harrison's naive comment, "There is no reason to doubt the existence of the law or its Solonian origin" (quoted by Sissa at p. 346, n. 16). Unfortunately, such uncritical credulity is typical of Harrison; nor is there reason to accept the authenticity of the law, since its existence is not even hinted at in any classical source, including those which discuss seduction (e.g., Lysias 1). Further, Plutarch had no way of knowing whether the law was Solonian or not, and his casual remarks about Athenian legal institutions are notoriously unreliable. Sissa nonetheless proceeds to build upon this unsound foundation: "The legal evidence [i.e., this "statute"] shows unambiguously that the sexual activity of a parthenos, a sexual activity that the term does not exclude, in fact has a clearly defined limit—namely, its discovery, the revelation of its existence" (p. 347).

Mediterranean and more than a millennium while claiming to define the social practices and conceptualizations of virginity in "ancient Greece." Unless we are to assume the essential cultural unity of this entire region throughout this full period,[47] the more pedestrian historian will find him- or herself wondering precisely whose practices and conceptions are under consideration.

I have dwelt at some length on the contrast between the methodologies of Hanson and Sissa because I think that it exemplifies a tension in the historiography of ancient sexuality between some versions of the "literary/anthropological approach" and the kind of more traditional (though theoretically and comparatively informed) methodologies practiced, for example, by Hanson, J. Redfield, P. Brown, and S. Price in this volume. If cultural historians are to sweep away the methods and assumptions associated with periodization, chronologies, and geographical divisions, they need to be more explicit about what canons if any they are substituting in their place. And if the notion of interpretative canons *tout court* has also been swept away by some Derridean notion of contested cultural "textual" readings, then the application of such practices to social historical investigation should also be defended.

Precisely this problem arises again in A. Carson's treatment of the way in which the ritual of the wedding was seen as defusing the danger represented by women's sexuality. Though the classical period often seems to define the social field of her analysis, her claims are explicitly phrased in terms of "Greek society,"[48] the "Greek view,"[49] "Greek thought,"[50] and "the Greek wedding ceremony."[51] Further, such vague references are not merely a manner of speaking. For example, in reconstructing the ideology of "Greek" wedding rituals, texts are read together to constitute an ahistorical cultural conglomerate: one four-page section devoted to "Work and Play" cites as evidence passages from Homer, Pindar, Archilochus, Theocritus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Menander, the Greek Anthology, Plutarch, Pausanias, Pollux, Photius, Achilles Tatius, Catullus, and Clement of Alexandria.[52] Similarly, Carson's evidence for the "sexual voracity" of women ranges across a millennium, from Pindar, Sophocles, and Aeschylus to Philo of Byblos, Achilles Tatius, and Alciphron.[53] There is no attempt to differentiate, as Hanson does, the ways in which beliefs, ideals, or practices may have shifted across this period which saw the political, social, and religious transformation of the Mediterranean.[54]

47. An assumption clearly refuted by Hanson's chapter discussed above.
48. "Putting Her," pp. 136, 144, 150.
49. Ibid., pp. 143, 147.
50. Ibid., p. 144.
51. Ibid., p. 151; and cf. "the ancient wedding," p. 162.
52. Ibid., pp. 149–53.
53. There are also significant problems in her reading of specific passages. For example, Carson characterizes Aristotle's view of women's sexual voracity as holding that "Exempt from shame, as from all fear of drying up, woman goes at sex like a hippomaniac mare" ("Putting Her," p. 142). The passage which she quotes to support this reads as follows: "In eagerness for sexual intercourse of all female animals the mare comes first, next the cow. Mares become horse-mad and the term derived from this one animal is applied by way of abuse to women *who are inordinate in their sexual desires*" (my emphasis, Arist. *HA* 572a8–13, as quoted by Carson, pp. 142–43, n. 18).
54. Note also the way in which Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague (chap. 7, "From Ambiguity to Ambivalence: A Dionysiac Excursion through the 'Anakreontic' Vases," pp. 211–56) argue that evidence from such diverse time periods cannot be brought to bear upon the study of the *komos*. In rejecting the use of a passage in Philostratus to interpret the fifth-century vases they masterfully illuminate, they state that "It is more than probable that both the realities of the *komos* and its figurative representation had evolved considerably over seven centuries" (p. 228).

Indeed, at least some individuals in the classical period clearly recognized the cultural discontinuities between earlier eras and their own society, as well as the important differences among Greek cities within a particular period. In Plato's *Symposium* (182Aff.), for example, Pausanias emphasizes the diversity of attitudes toward homoeroticism among the Greek poleis. Some cities, he claims, explicitly prohibit such conduct, others explicitly condone it, and Athens and Sparta are ποικίλος in their respective treatments. Xenophon makes the same point when he discusses the variation in laws and attitudes concerning paederasty among the Greek states.[55] Likewise, the norms, practices, and ideology regarding women also clearly varied between cities in classical Greece. Sparta was regarded as particularly extreme in the freedom it afforded women, while Athens may have been particularly restrictive. Clearly, the legal position of Spartan women in regard to property was fundamentally different from that in Athens. Aristotle, of course, emphasizes the diversity of constitutional arrangements among Greek cities and demonstrates the way in which such different political structures produced important social and cultural variations. Democracies were viewed as promoting a culture which allowed far greater autonomy to the individual, particularly in the moral and sexual spheres, than the stricter control afforded by oligarchic regimes. Whether such views are historically accurate or not, they reflect a widespread contemporary perception of the variability of social, cultural, and political values through the Greek world within this one time period. Further, there were clearly important variations in attitudes, practices, and values *within* Greek communities. As Pausanias says, laws, norms, and attitudes toward paederasty in Athens and Sparta were ποικίλος; that is, as anthropological studies would lead us to expect, they were characterized by ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradiction.[56] Thus, even apart from variations according to social class, a substantial body of evidence indicates that there were conflicting evaluations of various kinds of homoerotic and heterosexual practices, as well as the usual discrepancies between ideology and social reality.[57] In other words, sweeping generalizations about *the* Athenian attitude to any complex social practice are dangerous; such generalizations about "classical Greece" are even more precarious; and, certainly, the homogenization of the "Greek world," or of "Greek society," encompassing the period from Homer to Clement of Alexandria or Artemidorus, is simply untenable unless supported by rigorous demonstration.[58] The study of cultural continuity is important, but it is predicated upon the simultaneous appreciation of social transformation. Indeed, this is precisely the difference between studying cultural continuity as opposed to merely assuming the cultural identity of chronologically and geographically distinct social and political formations. The articulation of such artificial, and ultimately meaningless, homogenized constructs ("Greek society," "Greek thought," "the Greek world") defeats the very possibility of historical analysis. What would uncritically reading the *Chansons de Geste* together with the letters

55. *Lac. Constitution* 2.12–14; and *Symp.* 8.34–35.

56. See, e.g., Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory;* Comaroff and Roberts, *Rules and Processes;* T. Gregor, *Anxious Pleasures* (Philadelphia, 1984); and S. Brandes, *Metaphors of Masculinity* (Philadelphia, 1980).

57. See Cohen, *Law, Society, and Sexuality,* especially chaps. 6, 7, and 9.

58. See below the discussion of P. Brown's contribution, which makes clear the massive discontinuity in attitudes toward sexuality produced by the impact of Christianity. See also his much fuller treatment of this issue in *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988).

of Madame de Sévigné and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* tell us about the social practices of "French society"?

Even more surprising for an author whose orientation is feminist and whose bibliography abounds with anthropological works, is the ethnographic naiveté with which Carson treats characterizations of women. For example, failing completely to distinguish between ideology and practice, she flatly states that "A good woman does not exceed the boundary of her house."[59] Her further discussion of the attributes of the "respectable" (i.e., wealthy) woman underscores this point.[60] Numerous recent treatments of this issue emphasize the fundamental importance of not taking such ideological platitudes at face value,[61] and abundant evidence demonstrates the wide variety of activities and circumstances which regularly (and legitimately) took women out of their houses.[62] If a new cultural historiography is to live up to the challenge it addresses to traditional methodologies, it must be able to use its newer methods as more than window dressing.

On the other hand, the exposition by M. Gleason of the physiognomy of sexual identity in the second century[63] stands in sharp contrast to Carson's method. Gleason's careful and original study of the physiognomical construction of sexual "normality" and "deviance" convincingly demonstrates that anthropologically and theoretically informed methods can be intelligently and rigorously applied within a conventionally defined framework of social and intellectual history. Her semiotic reading of the physiognomy of the *cinaedus* both illuminates second-century conceptualizations of gender identity and indicates the way in which such conceptualizations could be employed in the service of normalizing strategies.

While the four essays just discussed, as well as the chapters of Halperin and Winkler, all explicitly deal with texts and topics relating to the social construction of gender in various ancient Greek societies, another group of chapters seems only tangentially related to these themes. Nonetheless, these essays, all of which are superb exemplars of various kinds of historical and literary approaches, enrich the volume both by their intellectual qualities and by the other perspectives they offer on subjects which bear in one way or another on sexuality.

The first of these, S. Price's well-known examination of Freud and Artemidorus on dreams,[64] is a dazzling exercise in intellectual historical critique. Price reads Artemidorus' theory of dreams against the Freudian tradition, successfully using his lucid analysis of Artemidorus' system to expose the culture-bound assumptions which underlie Freud's approach.[65] Next, J. Redfield examines the "cultural logic" of a ritual associated with the cult of Artemis Triklaria at Patras.[66] Redfield's bril-

59. "Putting Her," p. 156.

60. See ibid., pp. 160–61.

61. See, e.g., K. Dover, "Classical Greek Attitudes to Sexual Behavior," *Arethusa* 6 (1973): 59–73; J. Gould, "Law, Custom, and Myth," *JHS* 100 (1980): 38–59; D. Cohen, "Seclusion, Separation, and the Status of Women in Classical Athens," *G & R* 36 (1989): 3–15; and Winkler, *Constraints*, pp. 188–209.

62. See Cohen, "Seclusion, Separation."

63. Chap. 12, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.," pp. 389–415.

64. Chap. 11, "The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus," pp. 365–88.

65. Price's account of Artemidorus can also be fruitfully read in comparison with Winkler's, *Constraints*, pp. 17–44.

66. Chap. 4, "From Sex to Politics: The Rites of Artemis Triklaria and Dionysus Aisymnetes at Patras," pp. 115–34.

liant reading of the ritual and its underlying mythical context shows how a myth of sexual transgression acquires through the cultural power of ritual a political meaning. He uncovers the way in which a seemingly innocuous story of tragic illicit love manifests deep underlying social tensions and contradictions. Through the integrative and transformative power of ritual the community symbolically overcomes these contradictions and celebrates its reconstitution as a political body. In a much different vein, F. Zeitlin undertakes a major examination of the nature and structure of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*.[67] While less explicitly concerned with the construction of erotic experience than is Winkler in his treatment of the same text,[68] Zeitlin's subtle and suggestive reading does much to illuminate the way in which Longus represents the psychology of eros. Thus, while more an investigation of Longus' mimetic and representational poetics, the essay nonetheless provides the collection with an example of the way in which ancient literary and erotic theory could mutually inform one another to great artistic effect.

Finally, P. Brown closes the volume with a magisterial account of the transformation of sexuality in late antiquity.[69] Brown's treatment is not only of major historical importance in delineating the essential features of the "sexual revolution brought about by the rise of Christianity in the Roman world," but also bears directly on crucial theoretical issues raised by Halperin and Foucault. They maintain that it was not until the nineteenth century that "sexuality" developed, in the sense of what Halperin calls "a constitutive principle of the self," which "serves to interpret and organize human experience."[70] A further dimension of sexuality as a modern invention is its construction as "specifically *moral* domain"[71] which constitutes "the inmost part of an individual human nature . . . [and] holds the key to unlocking the deepest mysteries of the human personality: it lies at the center of a hermeneutics of the self."[72]

In tracing the forces which constituted the transformative axes of Christianity's sexual revolution, Brown outlines a notion of sexuality which seems clearly to fulfill the conceptual criteria elaborated above for what distinguishes "sexuality" from earlier cultural constructions of sexual life.[73] On Brown's view, one of the major threads in the emerging Christian conceptualization of sexuality was the "muted but tenacious tendency to treat sexuality as a privileged ideogram of all that was most irreducible in the human will" accompanied by another "widespread tendency to regard the body itself, by reason of its sexual components, as a highly charged locus of choice."[74] Conceived as the inmost secret of the human heart, sexuality was "now perceived as common to all human beings."[75] In forging a new link between body and mind, this sexuality, which now constituted a universal and crucially defining element of the human condition, provided the basis for

67. Chap. 13, "The Poetics of Eros: Nature, Art, and Imitation in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*," pp. 417–64.

68. *Constraints*, pp. 101–26.

69. Chap. 15, "Bodies and Minds: Sexuality and Renunciation in Early Christianity," pp. 479–93.

70. *One Hundred*, pp. 24–25.

71. Ibid., p. 65.

72. Ibid., p. 26.

73. As the title of his essay indicates, Brown himself, of course, explicitly refers to this transformative process as relating to the development of a new conceptualization of sexuality.

74. "Bodies," p. 481.

75. Ibid., pp. 481, 483.

a new spiritual/psychological conceptualization of individual identity: "Body and mind, now sensed as mysteriously interconnected through sexuality, had sunk together since the time of Galen, receding into the depths of the half-charted and, from now onward, ever fascinating unity of the self."[76] Brown's path-breaking analysis of a distinctively new sexuality which constitutes the "unity of the self," in addition to revising our understanding of the culture of late antiquity, should also provide the basis for further reflection on Foucault's claims concerning the absence of a notion of sexuality in earlier periods.

In conclusion, this diverse collection of essays does provide a broad variety of perspectives on the contemporary study of sexuality in the ancient world. Indeed, this diversity turns out to be one of the most positive features of the volume, for it reveals the strengths and weaknesses, the innovations, and the pitfalls of a wide range of historiographical approaches. If one accepts the editors' metaphor of the construction site, readers of this collection may perhaps think that the various "peepholes" reveal a variety of workers each with a different set of architect's plans for the proposed edifice. However, it is only to their credit that the editors have assembled such a pluralistic manifestation of their method of "cultural poetics"[77] involved in the difficult process of constituting its emerging identity. This cultural poetics, or, as I have referred to it, new cultural history, represents one of the most exciting, most important, and most problematic developments in the contemporary study of classical antiquity. The three books reviewed here contain some of the best work that this new approach has yet produced.[78] Together they offer classicists and ancient historians both an opportunity to rethink a good deal of conventional wisdom about the ancient world and a challenge to defend the methods and practices which have traditionally constituted their disciplines.

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76. Ibid., p. 492.
77. *Before Sexuality*, p. 4.
78. I do not mean to imply that all of the authors represented in *Before Sexuality* would wish to identify themselves with this approach.