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Sex, Sexuality, Sexual Intercourse and Gender: The Terms and Contexts of the Volume

1 What this volume is about: Terms, contexts and topics

Much time has passed since scholars were afraid that their papers and lectures about, or pedagogical discussions of, aspects of ancient Greek and Roman sexuality could be seen as inappropriate or even offensive. Nowadays, a Cambridge Dean, unlike the one mentioned in E.M. Forster's novel, *Maurice*, would never ask a student to omit "a reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks", i.e. pederasty.¹ Despite the study of gender and sexuality in the classical world being a relatively new field of enquiry, which has really only developed over the last thirty-five years, there is a booming interdisciplinary bibliography discussing as many as possible of the myriad particulars of ancient Greek and Roman sexuality and gender. What is still relatively understudied in classical scholarship, a battleground where many claims are still contested, is sex and sexual practices themselves. This volume aims to revisit, further explore and, through updated interdisciplinary approaches, shed more light on the textual and non-textual sources that help us reconstruct a clearer, more coherent and precise overarching picture of sex and all the practices related to it in Greco-Roman antiquity.

Let us start with an attempt to explain the use, in this volume, of terminology. There is a term in the subtitle of the volume which is of fundamental importance for marking the purposes and (the limits of) the content of the present book, which should be given a semantic clarification: *sexuality*. Sexuality remains a contested notion that cannot be unanimously defined. M. Foucault, D. Halperin and J. Butler, among other cultural constructionists, point out that it is a modern concept, being the product of acculturation that differs from time to time and from culture to culture, and that any theory about its application in the ancient world is permeated by modern sensibilities.² For Halperin, sexuality is a cultural construction and an object of cultural interpretation that is attached to specific

¹ See also: Halperin 1990, 1.

² Foucault 1978; Halperin 1990, 5; Butler 1999, 2004.

cultural institutions and contexts — this is what he calls *cultural poetics*: “the process whereby the society and its subgroups construct widely shared meanings — behavioural conventions, social distinctions, conceptual schemes, aesthetic values, religious attitudes, moral codes, gender roles and paradigms of sexual excitement. These meanings are jointly produced, distributed, enforced and subverted by human communities”.³ A similar idea appears in M. Foucault’s study, *History of Sexuality*: sexuality is seen as a cultural construction, which is covered by multiple layers of historical and cultural specificity that are generated by the conventions, the rules and practices of specific communities in human history.⁴ This specificity reminds us of the principles of the theory of New Institutionalism: different institutions have different *logics of appropriateness*. This means that “there are structures of meaning, embedded in identities and belongings: common purposes and accounts that give direction and meaning to behaviour, and explain, justify and legitimate behavioural codes”.⁵ The meaning of sexuality, in other words, is different from one time or cultural context to another.

Despite this profound cultural relativism, and perhaps also anachronism, in defining notions that relate to sexuality and its complex interrelation with two other notions, *sex* and *gender*,⁶ the insights that the chapters of this volume bring to the fore allow us to define *sexuality* as an individual’s *habitus*: both the physical (i.e. biological, bodily and erogenous) and cognitive/emotional traits or behaviours, which are exercised within, and are influenced by, a well-defined socio-political, legal, religious and moral — in broader terms, cultural — context. Sexuality as *habitus* is a performative act: it is not something one *is*, but rather something one *does* through sexual actions, desires, fantasies, fetishes and other cognitive behaviours (i.e. both verbal and non-verbal means of communicating what people, or groups of people, believe, think of or desire about sexual practices) in particular cultural contexts.

³ Halperin 1990, 4. On arguments for the opposite position, i.e. that the use of the terms *sex*, *sexuality* and *gender* to understand and theorise about the Greek and Roman worlds is not anachronistic: Holmes 2012, 6–11; Foxhall 2013, 3–4; Masterson, Rabinowitz and Robson 2015, 1–2.

⁴ Foucault 1985.

⁵ March and Olsen 2005, 4. Further on New Institutionalism: Merton 1938, 672–682; Simon 1965; Pitkin 1967; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Kratochwil 1984, 695–708; Apter 1991, 463–481; Weaver and Rockman 1993; March and Olsen 1995; Egeberg 2003.

⁶ Selected readings on sex, sexuality and gender include: de Beauvoir 1973; Manniche 1987; Dover 1989; Butler 1990, 1993; Laqueur 1990; Cohen 1991; Zeitlin 1996; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Brisson 2002; Skinner 2005; Johnson and Ryan 2005; Graves-Brown 2008; Blanshard 2010, xii; Holmes 2012; Hubbard 2014; Masterson, Rabinowitz and Robson 2015, 1–12.

This approach to sexuality points to the theories of S. de Beauvoir and J. Butler. The former “rejects the ‘mute facticity’ of bodies and, in *The Second Sex*, argues that a woman (and, by extension, any gender) is the result of culturally enforced actions and not of biological status (‘one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman’). The latter, likewise, rejects the idea that body pre-exists or is outside the gendered self. A central concept of Butler’s theory is that specific aspects of self are constructed through repetitive performance acts”.⁷ Seen from this angle, sexuality is an overarching term that includes both *sex* and *gender*. These two notions, protean in meaning and complicated historically, have left the scholarly community unable to provide a unanimous definition or factual description. The traditional perspective is that *sex* refers to “the erogenous capacities and genital functions of the human body”, as Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin define *sex* in their volume *Before Sexuality*,⁸ while *gender* is labelled as being the cultural construction of sexes, self and identity.⁹ Sexuality, as used in this volume, has an overarching semantic breadth, since it encompasses the dimensions of both sex and gender. To put it in a different way, sexuality in this volume is seen as being made of both sexually existentialist views, i.e. those about the (sexual) existence of individuals,¹⁰ and the corporeality of *sexual practices*, the physical acts of sexual intercourse.

The chapters of this volume aim to examine a variety of topics that have to do with that dual semantic meaning of sexuality, paying attention, in other words, both to the acts and practices of sexual intercourse and to the context that affects, determines, relates and gives meaning to them, i.e. legal, social, political, religious, medical, cultural/moral and interdisciplinary (e.g. emotional, performative, anthropological, psychological). Sexual practices and the contexts in which they appear are examined, as they are manifested in Greco-Roman *textual*

7 Serafim 2017, 4. See de Beauvoir 1973, 301; Butler 1986, 35–49; 1990, 129. Also: West and Zimmerman 1987, 126. For Beauvoir and Butler, there are actually three notions: *sex* as a biological factor of determining human self and identity; *sex category*, which is all the markers that denote biology; and *gender*, which refers to the variety of culturally constructed activities that are carried out or performed by individuals.

8 Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, 3.

9 On the traditional distinction between sex and gender: Comfort 1963; Oakley 1972.

10 The existential character that we suggest sexuality has is also evident in the succinct description by Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, 5–6: “sexuality represents the most intimate feature of an individual, that dimension of the personality which it takes longest to fathom and which, when finally known, reveals the truth about much of the rest... Sexuality is thought to provide a key to unlocking the mysteries of the self, even for *my* self: that is, I can explore and discover what *my* sexuality is”.

and *non-textual* sources (i.e. iconography, epigraphy, cultural artefacts etc.). The combination of the two enables us to better understand the all-inclusive notion of sexuality, as examined in this volume.

A caveat is necessary at this point: the chapters included in this volume are primarily concerned with sexuality, not with issues of gender, though gender is touched upon in several chapters where possible, as when the authors have to discuss the difference between (the theories of) naturally-given biological sexes and the cultural construction of gender roles. Another methodological remark is useful: Greece and Rome are not dealt with separately. Rather, each of the thematic units of this volume includes chapters that cover both cultures, as far as the subject matter allows, aiming at delineating continuities and differences and thereby offering valuable opportunities for comparison between Greek and Roman perspectives, though the space given to Greece and Rome respectively is unequal: only six chapters are devoted to the exploration of the sexual practices of Romans.

The value of this volume lies in two distinctive features. The first is the interdisciplinary approach to topics that are (largely) understudied in classical scholarship on ancient Greek and Roman sexualities. A synergy between the classical scholarship on sexuality in antiquity and modern interdisciplinary fields of research, ranging from psychology and cognitive sciences to performance studies, modern sex/gender theories and neuroscience is used as a methodological tool for shedding light on sexual practices in antiquity. Some of the chapters of this volume draw on and use a range of interdisciplinary perspectives and theories to approach ancient sexual practices. The chapter of Andreas Serafim, “Making the Body Speak: The (Homo)Sexual Dimensions of Sneezing in Ancient Greek Literature”, for example, explores how sneezing is presented in ancient texts as denoting an individual’s *kinaidic*, pathetic homosexual nature and effeminacy — a topic that draws on a variety of interdisciplinary theories, such as performance and non-verbal communication, social psychology and cognitive neurophysiology. The second distinctive feature of this volume is that it draws both on textual and non-textual sources to reconstruct a more accurate picture of the bodily sexual practices in ancient Greece and Rome. Chapters such as the one by Bartłomiej Bednarek, entitled “The Iconography of Soft Pornography: Allusions to Erotic Foreplay in Greek Vase Painting”, focus on the examination of non-textual sources, such as Greek vase paintings, to enhance our knowledge and understanding of intriguing and largely under-studied topics, as the sexual dimension of the use of chairs and stool is.

This updated approach to sexuality and sexual practices in the ancient Greek and Roman world has the potential to enhance our knowledge and understanding not only of matters that are related to sex *per se*, but also of the cultural workings in antiquity, i.e. how the beliefs of the ancients about sexuality connect with, and are being interpreted through the lens of, life within the civic and cultural communities of the past. Just as an individual's behaviour used to be judged in the light of civic ideals, arguments, thoughts and actions, as they are described in texts, so too was his/her sexual behaviour. The sexual use (or even abuse) of one's body is considered an expression of nature, infallible as it is, in the sense that it cannot be (fully or for long) manipulated to become a means of moral and behavioural disguise and deception (cf. *Book of Physiognomy* 74 B38).¹¹ This is crucial in determining the qualities, virtues and personality traits of the ideal citizen, which are perfectly encapsulated in the ideal of καλὸς κἀγαθός, “the beautiful and good” man (or, generally, individual). It has been argued, for example, that the references, in Demosthenes 18.259–260, to the Dionysian/ Bacchic ecstatic dancing moves of Aeschines, point not only to his sexual (im)morality, but also prominently to his low economic status (as he was notoriously accused of carrying out menial jobs) and his foreign roots.¹²

In elucidating the features, the functions and the cultural importance of sexuality and sexual practices in the intercultural context of ancient Greek and Roman worlds, this volume aspires to establish a framework within which the ancient textual and non-textual sources might be further explored. The insights taken from the contributions to this volume will attract the attention and research interest not only of classicists, but also of scholars in the disciplines of psychology, anthropology, sociology, communication, performance, sex/gender studies and body culture studies, contributing to the purpose of these disciplines to understand the world, including that of the past. The intercultural dimension of this (and any) discussion about sexuality and sexual practices in past textual or non-textual sources is a challenging research inquiry that should be undertaken be-

¹¹ In the *Book of Physiognomy* 74 (B38), two types of movements of movements are mention, the *natural* and the *affected* (i.e. the movements or mannerisms that people use to fulfill specific purposes). One of these purposes is disguise; for, there are “those who are certainly deviants, but who try to remove suspicion from themselves by striving to assume a manly appearance; for they imitate the gait of a young man and strengthen themselves with a certain stiffness and strain their eyes and voice and straighten their whole body, but they are easily detected when their true nature wins through and exposes them; for they often lower their neck and voice and relax their hands [...] Often they are detected when yawning too”.

¹² See Serafim 2019, 233–253.

cause it significantly enhances our knowledge and understanding of cultural systems. This volume does not aim, and cannot credibly pretend, to be the last word in the ever-growing field of sex/gender studies in the classical Greek and Roman world. It does not even aspire to provide a comprehensive survey of every bodily and biological aspect of sexual practices. It can only display some new sketches of topics which have the potential to enhance our knowledge and understanding of sexuality in antiquity, and which may ignite interest for further research.

2 Current scholarly perspectives and approaches

Continuing research, (non-)textual interpretations and a broad analytical focus emphasising socio-political, interpersonal and cultural approaches have shed welcome light on sexuality and sexual practices in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Two memorable books started the trend: *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece* (1932) by Paul Brandt (hidden behind the pseudonym “Hans Licht”), which, examining literary, historical and artistic evidence, presents the first full picture of several matters of sexuality and gender in ancient Greece (including details about prostitution, homosexuality and the sexual position of women in Greek life); and Michel Foucault’s *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality*, which delineated the approaches to (ancient) sexuality in the mid-1980s. Since then issues revolving around, and relating to, (broadly defined) sexuality in antiquity have been among the most widely discussed topics in classical scholarship.¹³ Much work has been done on homosexuality (e.g. Kenneth Dover: *Greek Homosexuality*; David Halperin: *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*; James Davidson: *The Greeks and Greek Love*);¹⁴ pederasty (Thomas K. Hubbard: *Greek Love Reconsidered*; Anthony Lear and Eva Cantarella: *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty*);¹⁵ male and female physiques, bodies and garbs (Mireille M. Lee: *Body, Dress and Identity*; Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and Glenys Davies: *Greek and Roman Dress from A to Z*); Eros and the erotic in myth and literature, with emphasis on the erotic as an emotion (Ed

¹³ On a comprehensive survey of classical scholarship on sexuality, starting from the works of Fredrich-Karl Forberg on Latin erotic poets and the hermaphrodites and discussing scholarship until the time of Jeffrey Henderson, Kenneth Dover and Claude Calame: Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, 7–20.

¹⁴ Also: Sergent 1986, 1986a; Dover 1989; Davidson 1997, 2001, 2007; Hubbard 1998, 2000; Rabinowitz and Auanger 2002; Cantarella 2002; Verstraete and Provencal 2005.

¹⁵ Also: Shapiro 1981, 2000; Percy 1996; Dodd 2000; Cartledge 2001; Konstan 2002; Scanlon 2005; Laes 2010; Lear 2011, 2014, 2015; Lear and Cantarella 2008; Shapiro 2015.

Sanders, Chiara Thumiger, Chris Carey and Nick Lowe: *Erōs in Ancient Greece*); adultery (Edward Cohen: *Law, Sexuality and Society*), pornography (Amy Richlin: *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*); and prostitution (Christopher Faraone and Laura McClure: *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*; Konstantinos Kapparis: *Prostitution in the Ancient Greek World*), to name a few, among other important studies.

Scholarly works on the history of sexuality in the diversified cultural contexts of antiquity, such as Halperin's *Before Sexuality*, James Robson's *Sex and Sexuality in Classical Athens*, the *Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities* edited by Hubbard, and *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World* edited by Mark Masterson, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and James Robson, also offer insights on sexuality and gender. Works that explore the cultural context in which ancient sexualities were manifested are also important in shedding light not only on the sexual life of the ancients, but also on the social organisation and the cultural patterns of ancient communities. Some insights can be taken from the few mentions we can make here: on women (Sarah Pomeroy: *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*; Helene Foley: *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*; Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin: *Feminist Theory and the Classics*); on power and identity construction (Lin Foxhall and John Salmon: *When Men Were Men: Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity*; and more recently, "Rhetorical Masculinity in *Stasis*: Hyper-andreaia and Patriotism in Thucydides' *Histories* and Plato's *Gorgias*" by Jessica Evans, in Sophia Papaioannou, Andreas Serafim and Kyriakos Demetriou: *The Ancient Art of Persuasion across Genres and Topics*).

Paul Chrystal in his book, *In Bed with the Romans: A Brief History of Sex in Ancient Rome*, offers invaluable information about sexual practices such as cross-dressing, transsexualism, same-sex marriage, orgies, rape and bad language. But, as this extremely selective and condensed overview of the most fundamental trends in the study of ancient sexuality (and gender) indicates, there remains scope for further research on sexual practices. The time has come for a comprehensive study of this subject throughout Greek and Roman texts, contexts and visual evidence, which synthesises the work that has been done, teases out seminal topics which relate to sexuality and which have remained (largely or vastly) under-researched, and outlines promising new directions for future scholarship.

3 The composition of the volume

This volume's parts are six in number, either revisiting topics that are still contentious and discussing them from an interdisciplinary perspective, or presenting new ideas and perspectives on sexual practices. The titles of the sections are the following: Part I. Aspects of Homoeroticism; Part II. Sex and Medicine; Part III. The Use and Abuse of Sex Objects; Part IV. Sexual Liminality; Part V. Sex and Disgust; and finally, Part VI. The Scripts of Sexuality: Drama, Novel, Papyri and Later Texts. Given the nature of this and any other multi-authored volume, consisting of several chapters from varied literary traditions (here ancient Greek and Latin), historical and cultural phases in human history, and a large pool of topics, the analysis of sexuality is unavoidably fragmentary. We hope, however, that taken as a whole both within the immediate context of each one of the six sections and within the wider context of the volume itself, these chapters carry out the three aims which are described in the last paragraph of the previous section: to synthesise current scholarly perspectives, to enhance scholarly knowledge by discussing understudied topics and, finally, to open up new directions in the scholarly discussion about (broadly defined) sexuality.

Part I, *Aspects of Homoeroticism*, consists of five chapters, the first of which, "Dover's 'Pseudo-sexuality' and the Athenian Laws on Male Prostitutes in Politics", by Konstantinos Kapparis, discusses the context and rationale behind the introduction of the *hetairēsis* and *dokimasia rhētorōn* (or *epangelia*) laws, as cited by Demosthenes and Aeschines. Kapparis focuses his attention on two laws, which, according to contemporary sources, were introduced to safeguard the democratic constitution. He compares the commentary on these laws in contemporary authors with their modern interpretations, as expressions of a moralistic attempt to rein in the desires of Athenian men towards each other, and he suggests that the wild speculation about these laws and their astounding misinterpretation in modern literature are not simply due to misunderstanding, but are a deliberate distortion of the historical truth for reasons and objectives which have to do with modern sexual identity politics. Kapparis argues that these laws were introduced as an exaggerated reaction to fears that low-life politicians, eloquent but shameless and corrupt, who had not hesitated to sell their own bodies for profit, would infect the institutions of democracy, damage public life, function as a bad influence on the people, and ultimately undermine and destroy the democratic constitution from within.

The second chapter, entitled "Group Sex, Exhibitionism/Voyeurism and Male Homosociality", is authored by Thomas K. Hubbard. One of the striking features of Greek erotic vase painting is its tendency to show intimate love-making,

whether of a same-sex or heterosexual nature, occurring in public spaces in full view of others who are engaged in similar acts or have some interest in what is happening. Recreational sex, aimed only at pleasure, not reproduction or pedagogy, is represented as a pre-eminently social activity which men and youths enjoyed in the company of other men and youths. Whether two men are enjoying a single woman together or one is just watching, the common thread through all the representations studied here is the centrality of masculine spectatorship and performance to the erotic imagination of a culture familiar with athletic display of nude bodies. The female prostitutes involved are of low status and no importance to the men, whose valued relationship is “homosociality” with each other.

In the third chapter of the first part of the volume, “Making the Body Speak: The (Homo)Sexual Dimensions of Sneezing in Ancient Greek Literature”, Andreas Serafim, using ancient treatises, especially those on physiognomy where information about bodily stature and physical mannerisms is given, and modern interdisciplinary theories that mostly draw on social psychology, cognitive neurophysiology and performance, with a particular interest in non-verbal communication, aims to show how and why sneezing is presented as denoting the homosexual nature of individuals, even if they try to hide it behind a strong physique or specific patterns of behaviour. It is argued that the non-verbal performance, i.e. the sound produced by sneezing and involuntary movements that may have accompanied it, seems to be the reason for the physiognomist’s recognition of a *kinaidos*.

In the fourth chapter, “Fell in Love with an Anus: Sexual Fantasies for Young Male Bodies and the Pederastic Gaze in Rhianus’ *Epigrams*”, Manolis Spanakis aims to give a fresh reconsideration of Rhianus’ epigrams, examining fantasy for young male bodies. The narrator’s eternal pursuit for sexual desire invites us to think about the existence of unfulfilled *pathos* in the Cretan poet’s narrative. The thematic focus of this chapter is on two motifs in Rhianus’ homoerotic epigrams: that the Graces bestow divine beauty and *charis* upon pubescent male bodies and adorn them with flowers; and that the allegorical use of hunting is demonstrated as an amatory game between the *erastēs* and the *erōmenos*.

The fifth and last chapter of Part I, “Silencing Female Intimacies: Sexual Practices, Silence and Cultural Assumptions in Lucian, *Dial. Meretr.* 5”, by Andreas Fountoulakis, aims to explore the ways female homosexuality is thematically integrated in Lucian’s fifth *Dialogue of the Courtesans*, a text that focuses on the sexual adventures of a hetaera called Leaina with another woman called Megilla and her female partner Demonassa. Despite its theme, the relevant details are not fully revealed as the narrative is articulated through an interplay of

speech and silence. Drawing on texts such as Herondas' mimiambos or the *Dream Analysis* of Artemidorus, this chapter seeks to specify the sexual practices alluded to by Leaina and the reasons why she avoids getting more specific about them. Her references and the reasons for her silence are related to broader assumptions and moral standards concerning gender and sexuality which were prevalent in Greek society and culture. This interplay of speech and silence is one of Lucian's narrative strategies to evoke cultural assumptions of a Greek past, and yet undermines by means of insinuation the values upon which that past was based. Issues of gender and sexuality thus become parts of a wider discourse focused on a process of cultural formation and change prevalent in Lucian's cultural milieu.

Part II focuses on the examination of aspects of sexuality that relate to ancient medicine — thus the title *Sex and Medicine*. The first of the two chapters this part consists of, “Clitoridectomy in Ancient Greco-Roman Medicine and the Definition of Sexual Intercourse”, by Chiara Thumiger, discusses the definition of sexual intercourse (and violence) from a historical perspective. She begins with the testimonies about clitoridectomy left by a handful of ancient medical authors, and places them in dialogue with a broad selection of interventions on the female body by figures of power or authority of various kinds from ancient literature and the modern era. Thumiger argues that these appear to reveal a common script in which control, violence and sex are central and intertwined. She illustrates the point through a number of figurative, as well as poetic images. Despite variations in details and register, what is usually meant by “sexual interaction” in literature or artistic figurations is the interaction between two bodies that involves the genitals of one or both — or some Ersatz or sex toy — for the purpose of the pleasure or gratification of one or both, and that sometimes raises concerns about procreation. Thumiger extends the definition of the English expression “sexual intercourse” to include intercourse as intrusion and action of one body, cast in a position of power and/or authority or seniority, on another body (typically female) by means of *some instrument* — whether an object or a part of one's body. The sexual pleasure, or sexualised satisfaction, is distributed in a way different from what is expected, eluding the body at the centre to only benefit the external actors and the attending audience.

The second chapter, “Sex and Epilepsy: Seizures and Fluids in Greek Medical Imagination”, by George Kazantzidis, aims to examine the pathologisation of sexual intercourse by looking at ancient Greek medical sources which, either implicitly or explicitly, assimilate sex and orgasm to an epileptic fit. The case is made that the Hippocratic author of *De morbo sacro* includes hints that guide the reader's imagination in this direction. The association between sex and epilepsy

is then examined in the writings of Aretaeus of Cappadocia, who makes the striking claim that sexual intercourse “bears the symbols of the disease”. While the metaphorical and literal connections between desire and “madness” have been thoroughly discussed in scholarship, relatively little attention has been paid to the morbid associations of sex itself. Through an investigation of a common vocabulary of spasms and fluids, involuntary bodily movements and induced shame, Kazantzidis’ chapter seeks to fill this gap by proposing epilepsy as an appropriate disease to think with when we are trying to approach the pathological dimensions of sex.

Part III, *The Use and Abuse of Sex Objects*, includes four chapters, all of which examine how inanimate objects are used in sexual intercourse or practices. In the first chapter of this part, “Some Dirty Thoughts about Chairs and Stools: Iconography of Erotic Foreplay”, Bartłomiej Bednarek presents the motif of clothes deposited on a chair or a stool, which pervaded vase painting from the late archaic period onwards. It was, arguably, recognised by ancient viewers as an allusion to undressing. Chairs and stools with clothes deposited on them were humble witnesses to the sexual practices of ancient men and women, and became somewhat marginal components of outwardly erotic scenes. More interestingly, seats without clothes on them also gradually became more and more a conventional sign of undressing. Such an iconographic marker set in a context that may be evocative of eroticism (ranging from kisses and gift-giving to something that could be taken as an innocent conversation), should, in many cases, be taken as a clear allusion to the intentions of the figures represented on vases, which may have triggered viewers’ fantasies about the aftermath of the scene they were looking at.

In the second chapter, “Olive Oil, Dildos and Sandals: Greek Sex Toys Reassessed”, Emma Stafford aims to reassess our limited evidence, considering the extent to which a class of “sex toy” can be identified, and the range of contexts in which such aids might have been used, in real life and/or as the stuff of erotic fantasy. Discussing the scene on an Attic red-figure pelike attributed to Euphronios, Alan Shapiro speculates whether the sandal might have been “known as Leagros’ favourite sex-toy” (in Thomas K. Hubbard, ed., *Greek Love Reconsidered*, New York, 29). The term appears anachronistic, but modern definitions frequently cite, as an example of the sex toy, the dildo — the object most often discussed as a sexual aid in scholarship on ancient Greek sexuality. Martin Kilmer’s *Greek Erotica on Attic Red-Figure Vases* (London 1993) provides the most systematic assessment of the subject, categorising olive oil and dildos as “sexual accessories” (the slipper comes under the heading “sexual violence”). Whilst useful as a collection of evidence, however, Kilmer does not always give sufficient weight to the problematic nature of his material, and he begs many questions especially

concerning female sexuality. More recent studies have provided more nuanced readings of individual images and texts, but no one since Kilmer has attempted a systematic treatment of the use of sexual aids in ancient Greece.

The third and fourth chapters deal with the use of statues in sexual intercourse. In the third chapter, “Statues as Sex Objects”, Regina Höschel examines how ancient literature presents the sexual interaction between humans and statues. While ancient texts mostly show us men filled with desire for images of beautiful boys or women (in some cases actually engaging in sexual activities with them), there are also some references to women yearning to satisfy their lust with the help of sculptures. In several tales, their desire appears frustrated by the immobility and coldness of the stone, even as the unresponsiveness of the image may further fuel erotic longing. Höschel contemplates these textual accounts against the backdrop of ancient sexual discourses, determines underlying narrative patterns and investigates what tales of agalmatophilia may tell us about ancient conceptions of art and beauty.

The fourth and last chapter of Part III, “Having Sex with Statues: Some Cases of Agalmatophilia in Latin Poetry”, by Charilaos N. Michalopoulos, examines stories of agalmatophilia in Latin literature, which seems to have had a particular taste for this kind of aberration. The theme is persistent across time and genres (epic, elegy, epigram), offering thus a wide range of tones which vary from profound sophistication to playful aesthetic delight. The Ovidian version of Pygmalion’s romantic involvement with his statue (*Met.* 10.243–297) serves as a starting point, since it offers a set of motifs with high frequency in agalmatophilia narratives. Laodamia’s infatuation with the wax effigy of her dead husband (Ovid, *Heroides* 13) and a selection of epigrams from the *Priapea* are used as case studies. In most instances agalmatophilia motifs help to establish the erotic character of the liaison between the human and the statue. In the *Priapea*, however, the human-centred approach is replaced by the perspective of the statue. The motifs of agalmatophilia are still present, but only to cause laughter and derision. Moreover, as it turns out, their (mis)application is not meant to undo them, but rather to reaffirm their (structural and thematic) importance as indispensable components in agalmatophilia narratives.

Part IV, *Sexual Liminality*, consists of three chapters that examine sexuality in contexts of liminality, a term that refers, in this volume, to the sexually ambiguous or ambivalent (mythical or textual) figures, contexts and binary situations. There is *human-animal liminality*, exemplified in the figure of the Satyr, which is the topic of the first chapter by Jeremy McInerney, and in human-animal sex, which is examined in the second chapter, that of José Malheiro Magalhães. In more detail, the first chapter, “Hephaistos Among the Satyrs: Semen, Ejaculation

and Autochthony in Greek Culture”, argues that the Satyr figure provides a model for understanding the role of Hephaistos, a god whose physical shortcomings mark him out as distinctly unOlympian. In common with the Satyrs, Hephaistos is a comic figure connected to sexual incompetence. These shortcomings, however, take on more significance than simple parody in the episode of Hephaistos’ attempted rape of Athena. This is a fundamental part of the Athenians’ autochthony narrative, which is shown to be deeply ambiguous. Exploring the paradox of pollution and procreation, this chapter finds that the foundation myth of the Athenians included parodic and transgressive elements as a way of giving expression to a subversive narrative that undercut a simple glorification of autochthonous Athenians.

Bestiality is the topic under examination in the chapter “Human-animal Sex in Ancient Greece”, which explores examples of human-animal sex in different ancient sources, aiming to ascertain if any of these literary accounts convey the cultural and social views on sex between humans and animals. The author, José Malheiro Magalhães, starts by approaching the mythological traditions of three female figures — Leda, Europa and Pasiphae — explaining the differences between these myths and breaking down the information they provide regarding human-animal sex in ancient Greece. He then explores references and allusions to human-animal sex in the works of several ancient authors, including Herodotus, Theocritus, Plutarch and Artemidorus Daldianus, analysing their context and ascertaining if the information they provide conveys the social perception of this sexual act.

Another kind of liminality, the *male-female liminality*, is discussed by Catalina Popescu in her chapter, the third in Part IV of the volume, which is entitled “The Womb Inside the Male Member: A Lucianic Twist”. The deconstruction of gender boundaries and polarities in Lucian’s *Verae Historiae* has been discussed in scholarship: it has been argued that, with the aim of ridiculing the ancient fear of feminine power and sexuality (which permeates the episode of sex between Greek sailors and Vine-women), Lucian creates an all-male society on the Moon. His Moonites practice sex in the back of their knees and scholars notice that much of their alien anatomy is altered as to avoid the feminine biology or to render it invisible in androgynous forms. Popescu argues that the feminine principle is not lost to the Moonites, and that Lucian playfully rediscovers it in their faulty gestational physiology, their difficulty to give birth and their post-partum nursing (dis)abilities. In other words, although the Moonites are male and carry enhanced masculine appendages, they essentially operate as cryptic and (at times) dysfunctional females.

In Part V, *Sex and Disgust*, the chapter of Gabriel Evangelou, entitled “Sex and Disgust in Martial’s *Epigrams*”, examines Martial’s notorious invective against lascivious old women who engage in sexual relations with other women, freeborn men who allow themselves to be anally penetrated, and anyone who performs oral sex on a man or a woman. Martial repeatedly and emphatically expresses the repulsion and disgust that he experiences at the sight or the thought of such people, whom he condemns for indulging in their sexual proclivities openly or behind closed doors. While his continuous attacks on these groups of people have received considerable attention in scholarship, the central role that the arousal of disgust and repulsion plays in his epigrams has not been adequately explored. Hence, this chapter examines the possibility that his harsh reproaches are not only used to criticise many of his fellow citizens who fail to control their sexual urges, but primarily to provoke laughter through the exaggerated depiction of anyone who deviates from the strict mores of society.

Part VI, the last of the volume, consists of six chapters that discuss aspects of sexuality in dramatic, papyrological, and other texts and contexts of ancient literature — hence the title *The Scripts of Sexuality: Drama, Novel, Papyri and Later Texts*. In the first chapter of this part, “To Voice the Physical: Sex and the Soil in Aeschylus”, Nikos Manousakis discusses the display of sexual activity in Aeschylus, focusing on how sex is constantly presented in terms (imagery) of agricultural living, bringing to the fore the — rather neglected — sensuality of Aeschylean poetry. In the rather short Aeschylean corpus of plays and fragments one finds several vivid implied references to sexual encounters voiced through the language of agriculture and fertility. Both heterosexual and homosexual activity is discussed with the aim of exploring aspects of sensuality in Aeschylus’ poetry.

The second chapter, “Seminal Figures: Aristophanes and the Tradition of Sexual Imagery”, by Dimitrios Kanellakis, outlines the history of farming and sailing imagery pertinent to sex and politics up to Aristophanes’ time, and discusses how the comic dramatist builds on that tradition. It is argued that in *Peace* he pursues a connection between the sexual and the political uses of agricultural imagery, both carrying negative connotations since Hesiod, thus promoting a so-far-overlooked ironic interpretation: more than just a cheerful call for ending the Peloponnesian War, the play hints at the risks for securing peace. Its pornographic content is a celebratory effect *prima facie*, but a political warning on a second level. Naval metaphors, on the other hand, are traditionally used independently for sex or politics, and so they are in Aristophanes. At any rate, comedy’s capability to bring such metaphors on stage challenges the boundaries between mental visualisation and optical perception.

The third chapter, “The Maiden who Knew Nothing about Sex: A Scabrous Theme in Novella and Comedy”, by Ioannis M. Konstantakos, examines the literary history of a recurrent figure in the ancient Greek humorous tradition: the ingenuous personage who has no idea of sex and cannot understand what the sexual act means. It is usually female characters who appear in this role. In an old Ionian novella, which subsequently survives as an inserted tale in the *Vita Aesopi* (131) and in the corpus of Aesopic fables (386 Perry), an imbecile girl is deceived by a rustic, who satisfies his lust upon her. In a coarser and more grotesque variation of the story, also included in a later collection of fables (410 Perry), the young girl is replaced by an ignorant old woman unwittingly raped by a youngster. The Archaic Ionian tradition also offers a male counterpart, Margites, the fool who did not know what to do with his wife on their wedding night. An analogous Hittite *Schwank*, the *Story of Appu*, suggests that the theme may have passed into Ionian narrative lore from Anatolian sources. The same pattern was dramatised in the Attic theatre, in a mythological comedy by Amphis burlesquing the myth of Callisto. The old Ionian tale was perhaps known to Boccaccio and inspired the story of Rustico and Alibech in *Decameron* 3.10.

Two of the chapters of the last section of the volume focus on papyrological sources. In their joint chapter, “Sex and Abuse in Unhappy Marriages in Late Antique Oxyrhynchus: The Case of Two Women’s Narratives Preserved on Papyrus”, Amphilochios Papathomas and Aikaterini Koroli examine aspects of sexuality in unhappy or abusive marriages and their connection to the exercise of physical and psychological violence against women, as it is attested in documentary papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt. The chapter focuses on two well-preserved narratives from late antique Oxyrhynchus, namely P.Oxy. VI 903 (4th cent. AD), and P.Oxy. L 3581 (4th–5th cent. AD), both written by women. These emotionally charged texts, serving as institutional means of defence for the victimised women, abound in information concerning sex in relation to forced marriages and domestic violence. Papathomas and Koroli offer an analysis of the two papyri, having three aims: first, to locate the implications of the problems in their sexual life, i.e. either non-consensual sex and/or sexual deceit; second, to sketch the portrait of the abused woman and the man-abuser; and third, to compare the texts that are under study with other texts, mostly documentary papyri, falling into the same thematic area, and to place them in their historical and philological context.

The other chapter that discusses texts in papyri is authored by Rosalia Hatzilambrou and has the title “‘Asexuality’ in the Greek Papyrus Letters”. This chapter explores the scarcity of love letters among the Greek letters written on papyrus

and similar materials. In the first part of her chapter Hatzilambrou briefly presents the extant specimens of Greek love correspondence in post-pharaonic Egypt, while also commenting on points in them that are relevant to her argument. In the second part, Hatzilambrou argues that the small number of papyrus love letters is striking, when compared to the emphasis placed on love and sexual desire in other texts of the same period, for instance in the magical papyri. The chapter puts forward the argument that the reason for the observed “asexuality” in the corpus of the Greek papyrus letters lies in a range of factors, which have nothing to do with the sexuality of the Greek speaking inhabitants of Egypt in the Imperial and Byzantine periods.

The last chapter of the volume is jointly authored by Stephanos Efthymiadis and Charis Messis and has the title “From Plato’s *Symposium* to Methodius’ and Late Antique Hagiography: ‘Female’ Readings of Male Sexuality”. This chapter examines a cluster of texts of late Roman antiquity, in order to see through and define what has been regarded as the womanly-female perspective of eroticism and sexuality. The figure of Diotima as in Plato’s *Symposium* is the starting point of this discussion, which chiefly dwells on the ten philosophising women as they appear in the Christianised version of *Symposium* attributed to Methodius of Olympus, an author of the third-fourth centuries AD. Attention is also paid to the way women are portrayed in the *Pseudo-Clementines*, an apocryphal text of the New Testament written in the first half of the third century. The chapter ends with a presentation of a new theory of gender and sexuality as launched in the *Christian Martyrdom of Sts Nereus and Achilles* (BHG 1317), a hagiographical text that brings out the rejection of marriage and sexuality. In all these texts women’s voices become a powerful instrument in the service of male writers.

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