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Is There a History of Sexuality?

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Sex has no history.¹ It is a natural fact, grounded in the functioning of the body, and, as such, it lies outside of history and culture. Sexuality, by contrast, does not properly refer to some aspect or attribute of bodies. Unlike sex, sexuality is a cultural production: it represents the *appropriation* of the human body and of its physiological capacities by an ideological discourse.² Sexuality is not a somatic fact; it is a cultural effect. Sexuality, then, does have a history—though (as I shall argue) not a very long one.

To say that, of course, is not to state the obvious—despite the tone of assurance with which I just said it—but to advance a controversial, suspiciously fashionable, and, perhaps, a strongly counter-intuitive claim. The plausibility of such a claim might seem to rest on nothing more substantial than the prestige of the brilliant, pioneering, but largely theoretical work of the late French philosopher Michel Foucault.³ According to Foucault, sexuality is not a thing, a natural fact, a fixed and immovable element in the eternal grammar of human subjectivity, but that "set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment" of "a complex political technology."⁴ "Sexuality," Foucault insists in another passage,

must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct [*dispositif*]: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowl-

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edges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.⁵

Is Foucault right? I believe he is, but I also believe that more is required to establish the historicity of sexuality than the mere weight of Foucault's authority. To be sure, a great deal of work, both conceptual and empirical, has already been done to sustain Foucault's central insights and to carry forward the historicist project that he did so much to advance.⁶ But much more needs to be accomplished if we are to fill in the outlines of the picture that Foucault had time only to sketch—hastily and inadequately, as he was the first to admit⁷—and if we are to demonstrate that sexuality is indeed, as he claimed, a uniquely modern production.

The study of classical antiquity has a special role to play in this historical enterprise. The sheer interval of time separating the ancient from the modern world spans cultural changes of such magnitude that the contrasts to which they give rise cannot fail to strike anyone who is on the lookout for them. The student of classical antiquity is inevitably confronted in the ancient record by a radically unfamiliar set of values, behaviors, and social practices, by ways of organizing and articulating experience that challenge modern notions about what life is like, and that call into question the supposed universality of "human nature" as we currently understand it. Not only does this historical distance permit us to view ancient social and sexual conventions with particular sharpness; it also enables us to bring more clearly into focus the ideological dimension—the purely conventional and arbitrary character—of our own social and sexual experiences.⁸ One of the currently unquestioned assumptions about sexual experience which the study of antiquity calls into question is the assumption that sexual behavior reflects or expresses an individual's "sexuality."

Now that would seem to be a relatively harmless and unproblematic assumption to make, empty of all ideological content, but what exactly do we have in mind when we make it? What, in particular, do we understand by our concept of "sexuality"? I think we understand "sexuality" to refer to a positive, distinct, and constitutive feature of the human personality, to the characterological seat within the individual of sexual acts, desires, and pleasures—the determinate source from which all sexual expression proceeds. "Sexuality" in this sense is not a purely descriptive term, a neutral representation of some objective state of affairs or a simple recognition of some familiar facts about us; rather, it is a distinctive way of constructing, organizing, and interpreting those "facts," and it performs quite a lot of conceptual work.

First of all, sexuality defines itself as a separate, sexual domain within the larger field of human psychophysical nature. Second, sexuality effects the conceptual demarcation and isolation of that domain from other areas of personal and social life that have traditionally cut across it, such as carnality, venery, libertinism, virility, passion, amorousness, eroticism, intimacy, love, affection, appetite, and desire—to name but a few of the older claimants to territories more recently staked out by sexuality. Finally, sexuality generates sexual identity: it endows each of us with an individual sexual nature, with a personal essence defined (at least in part) in specifically sexual terms; it implies that human beings are individuated at the level of their sexuality, that they differ from one another in their sexuality and, indeed, belong to different types or kinds of being by virtue of their sexuality.

These, at least, appear to me to be some of the significant ramifications of "sexuality," as it is currently conceptualized. I shall argue that the outlook it represents is alien to the recorded experience of the ancients. Two themes, in particular, that seem intrinsic to the modern conceptualization of sexuality but that hardly find an echo in

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ancient sources will provide the focus of my investigation: the autonomy of sexuality as a separate sphere of existence (deeply implicated in other areas of life, to be sure, but distinct from them and capable of acting on them at least as much as it is acted on by them), and the function of sexuality as a principle of individuation in human natures. In what follows, I shall take up each theme in turn, attempting to document in this fashion the extent of the divergence between ancient and modern varieties of sexual experience.

First, the autonomy of sexuality as a separate sphere of existence. The basic point I should like to make has already been made for me by Robert Padgug in a now-classic essay on conceptualizing sexuality in history. Padgug argues that

what we consider "sexuality" was, in the pre-bourgeois world, a group of acts and institutions not necessarily linked to one another, or, if they were linked, combined in ways very different from our own. Intercourse, kinship, and the family, and gender, did not form anything like a "field" of sexuality. Rather, each group of sexual acts was connected directly or indirectly—that is, formed part of—institutions and thought patterns which we tend to view as political, economic, or social in nature, and the connections cut across our idea of sexuality as a thing, detachable from other things, and as a separate sphere of private existence.⁹

The ancient evidence amply supports Padgug's claim. In classical Athens, for example, sex did not express inward dispositions or inclinations so much as it served to position social actors in the places assigned to them, by virtue of their political standing, in the hierarchical structure of the Athenian polity. Let me expand this formulation.

In classical Athens a relatively small group made up of the adult male citizens held a virtual monopoly of social power and constituted a clearly defined élite within the political and social life of the city-state. The predominant feature of the social landscape of classical Athens was the great divide in status between this superordinate group, composed of citizens, and a subordinate group, composed of women, children, foreigners, and slaves—all of whom lacked full civil rights (though they were not all equally subordinate). Sexual relations not only respected that divide but were strictly polarized in conformity with it.

Sex is portrayed in Athenian documents not as a mutual enterprise in which two or more persons jointly engage but as an action performed by a social superior upon a social inferior. Consisting as it was held to do in an asymmetrical gesture—the penetration of the body of one person by the body (and, specifically, by the phallus)¹⁰ of another—sex effectively divided and distributed its participants into radically distinct and incommensurable categories ("penetrator" versus "penetrated"), categories which in turn were wholly congruent with superordinate and subordinate social categories. For sexual penetration was thematized as domination: the relation between the insertive and the receptive sexual partner was taken to be the same kind of relation as that obtaining between social superior and social inferior.¹¹ Insertive and receptive sexual roles were therefore necessarily isomorphic with superordinate and subordinate social status; an adult, male citizen of Athens could have legitimate sexual relations *only* with statutory minors (his inferiors not in age but in social and political status): the proper targets of his sexual desire included, specifically, women of any age, free males past the age of puberty who were not yet old enough to be citizens (I'll call them "boys," for short), as well as foreigners and slaves of either sex.¹²

Moreover, the physical act of sex between a citizen and a statutory minor was stylized in such a way as to mirror in the minute details of its hierarchical arrangement the relation of structured inequality that governed the wider social interaction of the

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two lovers. What an Athenian did in bed was determined by the differential in status that distinguished him or her from his or her sexual partner; the (male) citizen's superior prestige and authority expressed themselves in his sexual precedence—in his power to initiate a sexual act, his right to obtain pleasure from it, and his assumption of an insertive rather than a receptive sexual role. Different social actors had different sexual roles: to assimilate both the superordinate and the subordinate member of a sexual relationship to the same "sexuality" would have been as bizarre, in Athenian eyes, as classifying a burglar as an "active criminal," his victim as a "passive criminal," and the two of them alike as partners in crime—it would have been to confuse what, in reality, were supposedly separate and distinct identities.¹³ Each act of sex was no doubt an expression of real, personal desire on the part of the sexual actors involved, but their very desires had already been shaped by the shared cultural definition of sex as an activity that generally occurred only between a citizen and a non-citizen, between a person invested with full civil status and a statutory minor.

The "sexuality" of the classical Athenians, then, far from being independent of "politics" (each construed as an autonomous sphere) *was constituted by the very principles* on which Athenian public life was organized. In fact, the correspondences in classical Athens between sexual norms and social practices were so strict that an inquiry into Athenian "sexuality" *per se* would be nonsensical: such an inquiry could only obscure the phenomenon it was intended to elucidate, for it would conceal the sole context in which the sexual protocols of the classical Athenians make any sense—namely, the structure of the Athenian polity. The social articulation of sexual desire in classical Athens thus furnishes a telling illustration of the interdependence in culture of social practices and subjective experiences. Indeed, the classical Greek record strongly supports the conclusion drawn (from a quite different body of evidence) by the French anthropologist Maurice Godelier: "it is not sexuality which haunts society, but society which haunts the body's sexuality."¹⁴

For those inhabitants of the ancient world about whom it is possible to generalize, sexuality did not hold the key to the secrets of the human personality. (In fact, the very concept of and set of practices centering on "the human personality"—the physical and social sciences of the blank individual—belong to a much later era and bespeak the modern social and economic conditions that accompanied their rise.) In the Hellenic world, by contrast, the measure of a free male was most often taken by observing how he fared when tested in public competition against other free males, not by scrutinizing his sexual constitution. War (and other agonistic contests), not love, served to reveal the inner man, the stuff a free Greek male was made of.¹⁵ A striking instance of this emphasis on public life as the primary locus of signification can be found in the work of Artemidorus, a master dream-interpreter who lived and wrote in the second century of our era and whose testimony, there is good reason to believe, accurately represents the sexual norms of ancient Mediterranean culture.¹⁶ Artemidorus saw public life, not erotic life, as the principal tenor of dreams. Even sexual dreams, in Artemidorus's system, are seldom *really* about sex: rather, they are about the rise and fall of the dreamer's public fortunes, the vicissitudes of his domestic economy.¹⁷ If a man dreams of having sex with his mother, for example, his dream signifies to Artemidorus nothing in particular about the dreamer's own sexual psychology, his fantasy life, or the history of his relations with his parents; it's a very common dream, and so it's a bit tricky to interpret precisely, but basically it's a lucky dream: it may signify—depending on the family's circumstances at the time, the postures of the partners in the dream, and the mode of penetration—that the dreamer will be successful in politics ("success" meaning, evidently, the power to screw one's country), that he will go into exile or return from exile, that he will win

his lawsuit, obtain a rich harvest from his lands, or change professions, among many other things (1.79). Artemidorus's system of dream interpretation resembles the indigenous dream-lore of certain Amazonian tribes who, despite their quite different socio-sexual systems, share with the ancient Greeks a belief in the predictive value of dreams. Like Artemidorus, these Amazonian peoples reverse what modern bourgeois Westerners take to be the natural flow of signification in dreams (from images of public and social events to private and sexual meanings): in both Kagwahiv and Mehinaku culture, for example, dreaming about the female genitalia portends a wound (and so a man who has such a dream is especially careful when he handles axes or other sharp instruments the next day); dreamt wounds do not symbolize the female genitalia.¹⁸ Both these ancient and modern dream-interpreters, then, are innocent of "sexuality": what is fundamental to their experience of sex is not anything *we* would regard as essentially sexual;¹⁹ it is instead something essentially outward, public, and social. "Sexuality," for cultures not shaped by some very recent European and American bourgeois developments, is not a cause but an effect. The social body precedes the sexual body.

I now come to the second of my two themes—namely, the individuating function of sexuality, its role in generating individual sexual identities. The connection between the modern interpretation of sexuality as an autonomous domain and the modern construction of individual sexual identities has been well analyzed, once again, by Robert Padgug:

the most commonly held twentieth-century assumptions about sexuality imply that it is a separate category of existence (like "the economy," or "the state," other supposedly independent spheres of reality), almost identical with the sphere of private life. Such a view necessitates the location of sexuality within the individual as a fixed essence, leading to a classic division of individual and society and to a variety of psychological determinisms, and, often enough, to a full-blown biological determinism as well. These in turn involve the enshrinement of contemporary sexual categories as universal, static, and permanent, suitable for the analysis of all human beings and all societies.²⁰

The study of ancient Mediterranean societies clearly exposes the defects in any such essentialist conceptualization of sexuality. Because, as we have seen in the case of classical Athens, erotic desires and sexual object-choices in antiquity were generally not determined by a typology of anatomical sexes (male versus female), but rather by the social articulation of power (superordinate versus subordinate), the currently fashionable distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality (and, similarly, between "homosexuals" and "heterosexuals" as individual types) had no meaning for the classical Athenians: there were not, so far as they knew, two different kinds of "sexuality," two differently structured psychosexual states or modes of affective orientation, but a single form of sexual experience which all free adult males shared—making due allowance for variations in individual tastes, as one might make for individual palates.²¹

Thus, in the Third Dithyramb by the classical poet Bacchylides, the Athenian hero Theseus, voyaging to Crete among the seven youths and seven maidens destined for the Minotaur and defending one of the maidens from the advances of the libidinous Cretan commander, warns him vehemently against molesting *any one* of the Athenian youths (*tin' êitheôn*: 43)—that is, any girl or boy. Conversely, the antiquarian *littérateur* Athenaeus, writing six or seven hundred years later, is amazed that Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos in the sixth century B.C., did not send for any boys or women along with the other luxury articles he imported to Samos for his personal use during his reign, "despite

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his passion for relations with males" (12.540c-e).²² Now *both* the notion that an act of heterosexual aggression in itself makes the aggressor suspect of homosexual tendencies and the mirror-opposite notion that a person with marked homosexual tendencies is bound to hanker after heterosexual contacts are nonsensical to us, associating as we do sexual object-choice with a determinate kind of "sexuality," a fixed sexual nature, but it would be a monumental task indeed to enumerate all the ancient documents in which the alternative "boy or woman" occurs with perfect nonchalance in an erotic context, as if the two were functionally interchangeable.²³

A particularly striking testimony to the imaginable extent of male indifference to the sex of sexual objects can be found in a marriage-contract from Hellenistic Egypt dating to 92 B.C.²⁴ This not untypical document stipulates that "it shall not be lawful for Philiscus [the prospective husband] to bring home another wife in addition to Apollonia or to have a concubine or *boy-lover*. . . ."²⁵ The possibility that one's husband might take it into his head at some point during one's marriage to set up another household with his boyfriend evidently figured among the various potential domestic disasters that a prudent fiancée would be sure to anticipate and to indemnify herself against. A somewhat similar expectation is articulated in an entirely different context by Dio Chrysostom, a moralizing Greek orator from the late first century A.D. In a speech denouncing the corrupt morals of city life, Dio asserts that even respectable women are so easy to seduce nowadays that men will soon tire of them and will turn their attention to boys instead—just as addicts progress inexorably from wine to hard drugs (7.150–152). According to Dio, then, paederasty is not simply a second best; it is not "caused," as many modern historians of the ancient Mediterranean appear to believe, by the supposed seclusion of women, by the practice (it was more likely an ideal) of locking them away in the inner rooms of their fathers' or husbands' houses and thereby preventing them from serving as sexual targets for adult men. In Dio's fantasy, at least, paederasty springs not from the insufficient but from the superabundant supply of sexually available women; the easier it is to have sex with women, on his view, the less desirable sex with women becomes, and the more likely men are to seek sexual pleasure with boys. Scholars sometimes describe the cultural formation underlying this apparent refusal by Greek males to discriminate categorically among sexual objects on the basis of anatomical sex as a bisexuality of penetration²⁶ or—even more intriguingly—as a heterosexuality indifferent to its object,²⁷ but I think it would be advisable not to speak of it as a sexuality at all but to describe it, rather, as a more generalized ethos of penetration and domination,²⁸ a sociosexual discourse structured by the presence or absence of its central term: the phallus.²⁹ It may be worth pausing now to examine one text in particular which clearly indicates how thoroughly ancient cultures were able to dispense with the notion of sexual identity.

The document in question is the ninth chapter in the Fourth Book of the *De morbis chronicis*, a mid-fifth-century A.D. Latin translation and adaptation by the African writer Caelius Aurelianus of a now largely lost work on chronic diseases by the Greek physician Soranus, who practiced and taught in Rome during the early part of the second century A.D. Caelius's work is not much read nowadays, and it is almost entirely neglected by modern historians of "sexuality";³⁰ its date is late, its text is corrupt, and, far from being a self-conscious literary artifact, it belongs to the despised genre of Roman technical writing. But, despite all these drawbacks, it repays close attention, and I have chosen to discuss it here partly in order to show what can be learned about the ancient world from works that lie outside the received canon of classical authors.

The topic of this passage is *molles* (*malthakoi* in Greek)—that is, "soft" or unmasculine men, men who depart from the cultural norm of manliness insofar as they actively

desire to be subjected by other men to a "feminine" (that is, receptive) role in sexual intercourse.³¹ Caelius begins with an implicit defense of his own unimpeachable masculinity by noting how difficult it is to believe that such people actually exist;³² he then goes on to observe that the cause of their affliction is not natural (that is, organic) but is rather their own excessive desire, which—in a desperate and foredoomed attempt to satisfy itself—drives out their sense of shame and forcibly converts parts of their bodies to sexual uses not intended by nature. These men willingly adopt the dress, gait, and other characteristics of women, thereby confirming that they suffer not from a bodily disease but from a mental (or moral) defect. After some further arguments in support of that point, Caelius draws an interesting comparison: "For just as the women called *tribades* [in Greek], because they practice both kinds of sex, are more eager to have sexual intercourse with women than with men and pursue women with an almost masculine jealousy . . . so they too [i.e., the *molles*] are afflicted by a mental disease" (132–133). The mental disease in question, which strikes both men and women alike and seems to be defined as a perversion of sexual desire, would certainly appear to be nothing other than homosexuality as it is often understood today.

Several considerations combine to prohibit that interpretation, however. First of all, what Caelius treats as a pathological phenomenon is not the desire on the part of either men or women for sexual contact with a person of the same sex; quite the contrary: elsewhere, in discussing the treatment of satyriasis (a state of abnormally elevated sexual desire accompanied by itching or tension in the genitals), he issues the following advice to those who suffer from it (*De morbis acutis*, 3.18.180–181).³³

Do not admit visitors and particularly young women and boys. For the attractiveness of such visitors would again kindle the feeling of desire in the patient. Indeed, *even healthy persons*, seeing them, would in many cases seek sexual gratification, stimulated by the tension produced in the parts [i.e., in their own genitals].³⁴

There is nothing medically problematical, then, about a desire on the part of males to obtain sexual pleasure from contact with males—so long as the proper phallocentric protocols are observed; what is of concern to Caelius,³⁵ as well as to other ancient moralists,³⁶ is the male desire to be sexually penetrated by males, for such a desire represents a voluntary abandonment of the culturally constructed masculine identity in favor of the culturally constructed feminine one. It is sex-role reversal, or gender-deviance, that is problematized here and that also furnishes part of the basis for Caelius's comparison of unmasculine men to masculine women, who assume a supposedly masculine role in their relations with other women and actively "pursue women with an almost *masculine* jealousy."

Moreover, the ground of the similitude between these male and female gender-deviants is not that they are both homosexual but rather that they are both *bisexual* (in our terms), although in that respect at least they do not depart from the ancient sexual norm. The tribads "are [*relatively*] more eager to have sexual intercourse with women than with men" and "practice both kinds of sex"—that is, they have sex with both men and women.³⁷ As for the *molles*, Caelius's earlier remarks about their extraordinarily intense sexual desire implies that they turn to receptive sex because, although they try, they are not able to satisfy themselves by means of more conventionally masculine sorts of sexual activity, including insertive sex with women.³⁸ Far from having desires that are structured differently from those of normal folk, these gender-deviants desire sexual pleasure just as most people do, but they have such strong and intense desires that they are driven to devise some unusual and disreputable (though ultimately futile) ways of gratifying them. This diagnosis becomes explicit at the conclusion of the chapter when

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Caelius explains why the disease responsible for turning men into *molles* is the only chronic disease that becomes stronger as the body grows older.

For in other years when the body is still strong and can perform the normal functions of love, the sexual desire [of these persons] assumes a dual aspect, in which the soul is excited sometimes while playing a passive and sometimes while playing an active role. But in the case of old men who have lost their virile powers, all their sexual desire is turned in the opposite direction and consequently exerts a stronger demand for the feminine role in love. In fact, many infer that this is the reason why boys too are victims of this affliction. For, like old men, they do not possess virile powers; that is, they have not yet attained those powers which have already deserted the aged. [137]³⁹

“Soft” or unmasculine men, far from being a fixed and determinate sexual species with a specifically sexual identity, are evidently either men who once experienced an orthodoxly masculine sexual desire in the past or who will eventually experience such a desire in the future. They may well be men with a constitutional tendency to gender-deviance, according to Caelius, but they are not homosexuals: being a womanish man, or a mannish woman, after all, is not the same thing as being a homosexual. Furthermore, all the other ancient texts known to me, which assimilate both males who enjoy sexual contact with males and females who enjoy sexual contact with females to the same category, do so—in conformity with the two taxonomic strategies employed by Caelius Aurelianus—either because such males and females both *reverse* their proper sex-roles and adopt the sexual styles, postures, and modes of copulation conventionally associated with the opposite gender, or because they both *alternate* between the personal characteristics and sexual practices proper, respectively, to men and to women.⁴⁰

Caelius’s testimony makes an important historical point. Before the scientific construction of “sexuality” as a positive, distinct, and constitutive feature of individual human beings—an autonomous system within the physiological and psychological economy of the human organism—certain kinds of sexual *acts* could be individually evaluated and categorized, and so could certain sexual tastes or inclinations, but there was no conceptual apparatus available for identifying a person’s fixed and determinate sexual *orientation*, much less for assessing and classifying it.⁴¹ That human beings differ, often markedly, from one another in their sexual tastes in a great variety of ways (including sexual object-choice), is an unexceptionable and, indeed, an ancient observation⁴²: Plato’s Aristophanes invents a myth to explain why some men like women, why some men like boys, why some women like men, and why some women like women (*Symposium* 189c–193d). But it is not immediately evident that patterns of sexual object-choice are by their very nature more revealing about the temperament of individual human beings, more significant determinants of personal *identity*, than, for example, patterns of dietary object-choice.⁴³ And yet, it would never occur to us to refer a person’s dietary preference to some innate, characterological disposition,⁴⁴ to see in his or her strongly expressed and even unvarying preference for the white meat of chicken the symptom of a profound psychophysical orientation, leading us to identify him or her in contexts quite removed from that of the eating of food as, say, a “pectoriphage” or a “stethovore”; nor would we be likely to inquire further, making nicer discriminations according to whether an individual’s predilection for chicken breasts expressed itself in a tendency to eat them quickly or slowly, seldom or often, alone or in company, under normal circumstances or only in periods of great stress, with a clear or a guilty conscience (“ego-dystonic pectoriphagia”), beginning in earliest childhood or originating with a gastronomic trauma suffered in adolescence. If such questions did occur to us, moreover, I very much

doubt whether we would turn to the academic disciplines of anatomy, neurology, clinical psychology, genetics, or sociobiology in the hope of obtaining a clear causal solution to them. That is because (1) we regard the liking for certain foods as a matter of taste; (2) we currently lack a theory of taste; and (3) in the absence of a theory we do not normally subject our behavior to intense, scientific or aetiological, scrutiny.

In the same way, it never occurred to the ancients to ascribe a person's sexual tastes to some positive, structural, or constitutive sexual feature of his or her personality. Just as we tend to assume that human beings are not individuated at the level of dietary preference and that we all, despite many pronounced and frankly acknowledged differences from one another in dietary habits, share the same fundamental set of alimentary appetites, and hence the same "dieticity" or "edility," so most premodern and non-Western cultures, despite an awareness of the range of possible variations in human sexual behavior, refuse to individuate human beings at the level of sexual preference and assume, instead, that we all share the same fundamental set of sexual appetites, the same "sexuality." For most of the world's inhabitants, in other words, "sexuality" is no more a "fact of life" than "dieticity." Far from being a necessary or intrinsic constituent of human life, "sexuality" seems indeed to be a uniquely modern, Western, even bourgeois production—one of those cultural fictions which in every society give human beings access to themselves as meaningful actors in their world, and which are thereby objectivated.

If there is a lesson that we should draw from this picture of ancient sexual attitudes and behaviors, it is that we need to de-center *sexuality* from the focus of the cultural interpretation of sexual experience—and not only ancient varieties of sexual experience. Just because modern bourgeois Westerners are so obsessed with sexuality, so convinced that it holds the key to the hermeneutics of the self (and hence to social psychology as an object of historical study), we ought not therefore to conclude that everyone has always considered sexuality a basic and irreducible element in, or a central feature of, human life. Indeed, there are even sectors of our own societies to which the ideology of "sexuality" has failed to penetrate. A sociosexual system that coincides with the Greek system, insofar as it features a rigid hierarchy of sexual roles based on a set of socially articulated power-relations, has been documented in contemporary America by Jack Abbott, in one of his infamous letters written to Norman Mailer from a federal penitentiary; because the text is now quite inaccessible (it was not reprinted in Abbott's book), and stunningly apropos, I have decided to quote it here at length.

It really was years, many years, before I began to actually realize that the women in my life—the prostitutes as well as the soft, pretty girls who giggled and teased me so much, my several wives and those of my friends—it was years before I realized that they were not women, but men; years before I assimilated the notion that this was unnatural. I still only know this intellectually, for the most part—but for the small part that remains to my ken, I know it is like a hammer blow to my temple and the shame I feel is profound. Not because of the thing itself, the sexual love I have enjoyed with these women (some so devoted it aches to recall it), but because of shame—and anger—that the world could so intimately betray me; so profoundly touch and move me—and then laugh at me and accuse my soul of a sickness, when that sickness has rescued me from mental derangement and despairs so black as to cast this night that surrounds us in prison into day. I do not mean to say I never knew the physical difference—no one but an imbecile could make such a claim. I took it, without reflection or the slightest doubt, that this was a natural sex that emerged within the society of men, with attributes that naturally complemented masculine attributes. I thought it was a natural phenomenon in the society of women as well. The attributes were feminine and so there seemed no gross misrepresentation of facts

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to call them (among us men) "women." . . . Many of my "women" had merely the appearance of handsome, extremely neat, and polite young men. I have learned, analyzing my feelings today, that those attributes I called feminine a moment ago were not feminine in any way as it appears in the real female sex. These attributes seem now merely a tendency to need, to depend on another man; to need never to become a rival or to compete with other men in the pursuits men, among themselves, engage in. It was, it occurs to me now, almost boyish—not really feminine at all.

This is the way it always was, even in the State Industrial School for Boys—a penal institution for juvenile delinquents—where I served five years, from age twelve to age seventeen. They were the possession and sign of manhood and it never occurred to any of us that this was strange and unnatural. It is how I grew up—a natural part of my life in prison.

It was difficult for me to grasp the definition of the clinical term "homosexual"—and when I finally did it devastated me, as I said.⁴⁵

Abbott's society surpasses classical Athenian society in the extent to which power relations are gendered. Instead of the Greek system which preserves the distinction between males and females but overrides it when articulating categories of the desirable and undesirable in favor of a distinction between dominant and submissive persons, the system described by Abbott wholly assimilates categories of sociosexual identity to categories of gender identity—in order, no doubt, to preserve the association in Abbott's world between "masculinity" and the love of "women." What determines gender, for Abbott, is not anatomical sex but social status and personal style. "Men" are defined as those who "compete with other men in the pursuits men, among themselves, engage in," whereas "women" are characterized by the possession of "attributes that naturally complement masculine attributes"—namely, a "tendency to need, to depend on another man" for the various benefits won by the victors in "male" competition. In this way "a natural sex emerges within the society of men" and qualifies, by virtue of its exclusion from the domain of "male" precedence and autonomy, as a legitimate target of "male" desire.

The salient features of Abbott's society are uncannily reminiscent of those features of classical Athenian society with which we are already familiar. Most notable is the division of the society into superordinate and subordinate groups and *the production of desire* for members of the subordinate group in members of the superordinate one. Desire is sparked in this system, as in classical Athens, only when it arcs across the political divide, only when it traverses the boundary that marks out the limits of intramural competition among the élite and that thereby distinguishes subjects from objects of sexual desire. Sex between "men"—and, therefore, "homosexuality"—remains unthinkable in Abbott's society (even though sex between anatomical males is an accepted and intrinsic part of the system), just as sex between citizens, between members of the empowered social caste, is practically inconceivable in classical Athenian society. Similarly, sex between "men" and "women" in Abbott's world is not a private experience in which social identities are lost or submerged; rather, in Abbott's society as in classical Athens, the act of sex—instead of implicating both sexual partners in a common "sexuality"—helps to articulate, to define, and to actualize the differences in status between them.

To discover and to write the history of sexuality has long seemed to many a sufficiently radical undertaking in itself, inasmuch as its effect (if not always the intention behind it) is to call into question the very naturalness of what we currently take to be essential to our individual natures. But in the course of implementing that ostensibly radical project many historians of sexuality seem to have reversed—perhaps unwittingly—its radical design: by preserving "sexuality" as a stable category of historical analysis not only have they not denaturalized it but, on the contrary, they have newly idealized

it.⁴⁶ To the extent, in fact, that histories of "sexuality" succeed in concerning themselves with *sexuality*, to just that extent are they doomed to fail as *histories* (Foucault himself taught us that much), unless they also include as an essential part of their proper enterprise the task of demonstrating the historicity, conditions of emergence, modes of construction, and ideological contingencies of the very categories of analysis that undergird their own practice.⁴⁷ Instead of concentrating our attention specifically on the history of sexuality, then, we need to define and refine a new, and radical, historical sociology of psychology, an intellectual discipline designed to analyze the cultural poetics of desire, by which I mean the processes whereby sexual desires are constructed, mass-produced, and distributed among the various members of human living-groups.⁴⁸ We must train ourselves to recognize conventions of feeling as well as conventions of behavior and to interpret the intricate texture of personal life as an artifact, as the determinate outcome, of a complex and arbitrary constellation of cultural processes. We must, in short, be willing to admit that what seem to be our most inward, authentic, and private experiences are actually, in Adrienne Rich's admirable phrase, "shared, unnecessary/and political."⁴⁹

A little less than fifty years ago W.H. Auden asked, in the opening lines of a canzone, "When shall we learn, what should be clear as day, We cannot choose what we are free to love?"⁵⁰ It is a characteristically judicious formulation: love, if it is to be love, must be a free act, but it is also inscribed within a larger circle of constraint, within conditions that make possible the exercise of that "freedom." The task of distinguishing freedom from constraint in love, of learning to trace the shifting and uncertain boundaries between the self and the world, is a dizzying and, indeed, an endless undertaking. If I have not significantly advanced this project here, I hope at least to have encouraged others not to abandon it.

NOTES

Most of the material contained in this article appears, in slightly different form, in the title essay of my collection, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1989), or in the Editors' Introduction to *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, 1990).

1. Or, if it does, that history is a matter for the evolutionary biologist, not for the historian; see Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, *The Origins of Sex* (New Haven, 1985).

2. I adapt this formulation from a passage in Louis Adrian Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture," *Representations* 2 (1983), 61-94 (passage on p. 62), which describes in turn the concept of the "sex/gender system" introduced by Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York, 1975), 157-210.

3. Volumes Two and Three of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, published shortly before his death, depart significantly from the theoretical orientation of his earlier work in favor of a more concrete interpretative practice; see my remarks in "Two Views of Greek Love: Harald Patzer and Michel Foucault," *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 62-71, esp. 64.

4. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, transl. Robert Hurley (New York, 1978), 127. See Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington, 1987), 1-30, esp. 3, who extends Foucault's critique of sexuality to gender.

5. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 105-106.

6. Of special relevance are: Robert A. Padgug, "Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in History," *Radical History Review* 20 (1979), 3-23; George Chauncey, Jr., "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance," in *Homosexuality: Sacrilege, Vision, Politics*, ed. Robert Boyers and George Steiner = *Salmagundi* 58-59 (1982-1983), 114-146; Arnold I. Davidson, "Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality," *Critical*

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Inquiry 14 (1987–1988), 16–48. See also *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality*, ed. Pat Caplan (London, 1987); T. Dunbar Moodie, "Migrancy and Male Sexuality on the Southern African Gold Mines," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14 (1987–1988), 228–256; George Chauncey, Jr., "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War One Era," *Journal of Social History* 19 (1985–1986), 189–211.

7. E.g., Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume Two*, transl. Robert Hurley (New York, 1985), 92, 253.

8. In applying the term "ideological" to sexual experience, I have been influenced by the formulation of Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media, and the 'Ideological Effect,'" in *Mass Communication and Society*, ed. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, Janet Woolcott, et al. (London, 1977), 315–348, esp. 330: "ideology as a social practice consists of the 'subject' positioning himself in the specific complex, the objectivated field of discourses and codes which are available to him in language and culture at a particular historical conjuncture" (quoted by Ken Tucker and Andrew Treno, "The Culture of Narcissism and the Critical Tradition: An Interpretative Essay," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 25 [1980], 341–355 [quotation on p. 351]); see also Hall's trenchant discussion of the constitutive role of ideology in "Deviance, Politics, and the Media," in *Deviance and Social Control*, ed. Paul Rock and Mary McIntosh, *Explorations in Sociology* 3 (London, 1974), 261–305, and reprinted in this volume.

9. Padgug, 16.

10. I say "phallus" rather than "penis" because (1) what qualifies as a phallus in this discursive system does not always turn out to be a penis (see note 29, below) and (2) even when phallus and penis have the same extension, or reference, they still do not have the same intension, or meaning: "phallus" betokens not a specific item of the male anatomy *simpliciter* but that same item *taken under the description* of a cultural signifier; (3) hence, the meaning of "phallus" is ultimately determined by its function in the larger sociosexual discourse; i.e., it is that which penetrates, that which enables its possessor to play an "active" sexual role, and so forth: see Rubin, 190–192.

11. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 215, puts it very well: "sexual relations—always conceived in terms of the model act of penetration, assuming a polarity that opposed activity and passivity—were seen as being of the same type as the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, an individual who dominates and one who is dominated, one who commands and one who complies, one who vanquishes and one who is vanquished."

12. In order to avoid misunderstanding, I should emphasize that by calling all persons belonging to these four groups "statutory minors," I do not wish either to suggest that they enjoyed the same status as one another or to obscure the many differences in status that could obtain between members of a single group—e.g., between a wife and a courtesan—differences that may not have been perfectly isomorphic with the legitimate modes of their sexual use. Nonetheless, what is striking about Athenian social usage is the tendency to collapse such distinctions as did indeed obtain between different categories of social subordinates and to create a single opposition between them all, *en masse*, and the class of adult male citizens: on this point, see Mark Golden, "Pais, 'Child' and 'Slave,'" *L'Antiquité classique* 54 (1985), 91–104, esp. 101 and 102, n. 38.

13. I have borrowed this analogy from Arno Schmitt, who uses it to convey what the modern sexual categories would look like from a traditional Islamic perspective: see Gianni De Martino and Arno Schmitt, *Kleine Schriften zu zwischenmännlicher Sexualität und Erotik in der muslimischen Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 1985), 19. Note that even the category of anatomical sex, defined in such a way as to include both men and women, seems to be absent from Greek thought for similar reasons: the complementarity of men and women as sexual partners implies to the Greeks a polarity, a difference in species, too extreme to be bridged by a single sexual concept equally applicable to each. In Greek medical writings, therefore, "the notion of sex never gets formalized as a functional identity of male and female, but is expressed solely through the representation of asymmetry and of complementarity between male and female, indicated constantly by abstract adjectives (*to thêly* ['the feminine'], *to arren* ['the masculine'])," according to Paola Manuli, "Donne mascoline, femmine sterili, vergini perpetue: La ginecologia greca tra Ippocrate e Sorano," in Silvia Campese, Paola Manuli, and Giulia Sissa, *Madre materia: Sociologia e biologia della donna greca* (Turin, 1983), 147–192, esp. 151 and 201n.

14. Maurice Godelier, "The Origins of Male Domination," *New Left Review* 127 (May-June, 1981), 3-17 (quotation on p. 17); cf. Maurice Godelier, "Le sexe comme fondement ultime de l'ordre social et cosmique chez les Baruya de Nouvelle-Guinée. Mythe et réalité," in *Sexualité et pouvoir*, ed. Armando Verdiglione (Paris, 1976), 268-306, esp. 295-296.

15. I am indebted for this observation to Professor Peter M. Smith of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who notes that Sappho and Plato are the chief exceptions to this general rule.

16. See John J. Winkler, "Unnatural Acts: Erotic Protocols in Artemidoros' *Dream Analysis*," *Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York, 1989), 17-44, 221-224.

17. S.R.F. Price, "The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidoros," *Past and Present* 113 (November, 1986), 3-37, abridged in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, 1990), 365-387; see also Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume Three, transl. Robert Hurley (New York, 1986), 3-36, esp. 26-34.

18. See Waud H. Kracke, "Dreaming in Kagwahiv: Dream Beliefs and Their Psychic Uses in an Amazonian Indian Culture," *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society* 8 (1979), 119-171, esp. 130-132, 163 (on the predictive value of dreams) and 130-131, 142-145, 163-164, 168 (on the reversal of the Freudian direction of signification—which Kracke takes to be a culturally constituted defense mechanism and which he accordingly undervalues); Thomas Gregor, "'Far, Far Away My Shadow Wandered . . .': The Dream Symbolism and Dream Theories of the Mehinaku Indians of Brazil," *American Ethnologist* 8 (1981), 709-720, esp. 712-713 (on predictive value) and 714 (on the reversal of signification), largely recapitulated in Thomas Gregor, *Anxious Pleasures: The Sexual Lives of an Amazonian People* (Chicago, 1985), 152-161, esp. 153. Foucault's comments on Artemidoros, in *The Care of the Self*, 35-36, are relevant here: "The movement of analysis and the procedures of valuation do not go from the act to a domain such as sexuality or the flesh, a domain whose divine, civil, or natural laws would delineate the permitted forms; they go from the subject as a sexual actor to the other areas of life in which he pursues his [familial, social, and economic] activity. And it is in the relationship between these different forms of activity that the principles of evaluation of a sexual behavior are essentially, but not exclusively, situated."

19. Note that even the human genitals themselves do not necessarily figure as sexual signifiers in all cultural or representational contexts: for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (1986), 399-439, argues in considerable detail that there is "reason to think that medieval people saw Christ's penis not primarily as a sexual organ but as the object of circumcision and therefore as the wounded, bleeding flesh with which it was associated in painting and in text" (p. 407).

20. Padgug, 8.

21. Paul Veyne, in "La famille et l'amour sous le Haut-Empire romain," *Annales (E.S.C.)* 33 (1978), 35-63, remarks (p. 50) that Seneca's *Phaedra* is the earliest text to associate homosexual inclinations with a distinct type of subjectivity. The question is more complex than that, however, and a thorough exploration of it would require scrutinizing more closely the ancient figure of the *kinaidos*, a now-defunct sexual life-form: for details, see Maud W. Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.," in *Before Sexuality*, 389-415; John J. Winkler, "Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men's Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens," *Constraints of Desire*, 45-70, 224-226.

22. See Padgug, 3, who mistakenly ascribes Athenaeus's comment to Alexis of Samos (Jacoby, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 539, fr. 2).

23. See K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London, 1978), 63-67, for an extensive, but admittedly partial, list; also, Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1983), 94. For some Roman examples, see T. Wade Richardson, "Homosexuality in the *Satyricon*," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 35 (1984), 105-127, esp. 111.

24. I wish to emphasize that I am *not* claiming that all Greek men must have felt such indifference: on the contrary, plenty of ancient evidence testifies to the strength of individual preferences for a sexual object of one sex rather than another (see note 42, below). But many ancient documents bear witness to a certain constitutional reluctance on the part of the Greeks

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to predict, in any given instance, the sex of another man's beloved merely on the basis of that man's past sexual behavior or previous pattern of sexual object-choice.

25. *P. Tebtunis* I 104, translated by A.S. Hunt and C.C. Edgar, in *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, ed. Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore, 1982), 59-60; another translation is provided, along with a helpful discussion of the document and its typicality, by Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt from Alexander to Cleopatra* (New York, 1984), 87-89.

26. "Une bisexualité de sabrage": Veyne, 50-55; see the critique by Ramsay MacMullen, "Roman Attitudes to Greek Love," *Historia* 32 (1983), 484-502, esp. 491-497. Other scholars who describe the ancient behavioral phenomenon as "bisexuality" include Luc Brisson, "Bisexualité et médiation en Grèce ancienne," *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* 7 (1973), 27-48; Alain Schnapp, "Une autre image de l'homosexualité en Grèce ancienne," *Le Débat* 10 (1981), 107-117, esp. 116-117; Lawrence Stone, "Sex in the West," *The New Republic* (July 8, 1985), 25-37, esp. 30-32 (with doubts). *Contra*, Padgug, 13: "to speak, as is common, of the Greeks, as 'bisexual' is illegitimate as well, since that merely adds a new, intermediate category, whereas it was precisely the categories themselves which had no meaning in antiquity."

27. T.M. Robinson, [Review of Dover's *Greek Homosexuality*], *Phoenix* 35 (1981), 160-163, esp. 162: "the reason why a heterosexual majority might have looked with a tolerant eye on 'active' homosexual practice among the minority, and even in some measure within their own group [!], . . . is predictably a sexist one: to the heterosexual majority, to whom (in a man's universe) the 'good' woman is *kata physin* [i.e., naturally] passive, obedient, and submissive, the 'role' of the 'active' homosexual will be tolerable precisely because his goings-on can, without too much difficulty, be equated with the 'role' of the male *heterosexual*, i.e., to dominate and subdue; what the two have in common is greater than what divides them." But this seems to me to beg the very question that the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality is supposedly designed to solve.

28. An excellent analysis of the contemporary Mediterranean version of this ethos has been provided by David Gilmore, "Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. Gilmore, Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association, 22 (Washington, D.C., 1987), 2-21, esp. 8-16.

29. By "phallus" I mean a culturally constructed signifier of social power: for the terminology, see note 10, above. I call Greek sexual discourse phallic because (1) sexual contacts are polarized around phallic action—i.e., they are defined by who has the phallus and by what is done with it; (2) sexual pleasures other than phallic pleasures do not count in categorizing sexual contacts; (3) in order for a contact to qualify as sexual, one—and no more than one—of the two partners is required to have a phallus (boys are treated in paederastic contexts as essentially un-phallused [see Martial, 11.22; but cf. *Palatine Anthology* 12.3, 7, 197, 207, 216, 222, 242] and tend to be assimilated to women; in the case of sex between women, one partner—the "tribad"—is assumed to possess a phallus-equivalent [an over-developed clitoris] and to penetrate the other: sources for the ancient conceptualization of the tribad—no complete modern study of this fascinating and long-lived fictional type, which survived into the early decades of the twentieth century, is known to me—have been assembled by Friedrich Karl Forberg, *Manual of Classical Erotology*, transl. Julian Smithson [Manchester, 1884; repr. New York, 1966], II, 108-167; Paul Brandt [pseud. "Hans Licht"], *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*, transl. J.H. Freese, ed. Lawrence H. Dawson [London, 1932], 316-328; Gaston Vorberg, *Glossarium eroticum* [Hanau, 1965], 654-655; and Werner A. Krenkel, "Masturbation in der Antike," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität Rostock* 28 [1979], 159-178, esp. 171. For a recent discussion, see Judith P. Hallett, "Female Homoeroticism and the Denial of Roman Reality in Latin Literature," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3.1 [1989], 209-238.

30. Exceptions include Vern L. Bullough, *Homosexuality: A History* (New York, 1979), 3-5, and John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, 1980), 53n., 75n.

31. For an earlier use of *mollis* in this almost technical sense, see Juvenal, 9.38.

32. See P.H. Schrijvers, *Eine medizinische Erklärung der männlichen Homosexualität aus der Antike (Caelius Aurelianus DE MORBIS CHRONICIS IV 9)* (Amsterdam, 1985), 11.

33. I have borrowed this entire argument from Schrijvers, 7–8; the same point about the passage from *De morbis acutis* had been made earlier—unbeknownst to Schrijvers, apparently—by Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 53, n. 33; 75, n. 67.

34. Translation (with my emphasis and amplification) by I.E. Drabkin, ed. and transl., *Caelius Aurelianus: ON ACUTE DISEASES and ON CHRONIC DISEASES* (Chicago, 1950), 413.

35. As his chapter title, “*De mollibus sive subactis*,” implies.

36. See especially the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata* 4.26, well discussed by Dover, 168–170, and by Winkler, “Laying Down the Law,” 67–69; generally, Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 53; Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 204–214.

37. The Latin phrase *quod utranque Venerem exerceant* is so interpreted by both Drabkin, 901n., and Schrijvers, 32–33, who secures this reading by citing Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.323, where Teiresias, who had been both a man and a woman, is described as being learned in the field of *Venus utraque*. Compare Petronius, *Satyricon* 43.8: *omnis minervae homo*.

38. I follow, once again, the insightful commentary by Schrijvers, 15.

39. I quote from the translation by Drabkin, 905, which is based on his plausible, but nonetheless speculative, reconstruction (accepted by Schrijvers, 50) of a desperately corrupt text. For the notion expressed in it, compare Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. Pierre Clarac and André Ferré (Paris, 1954), III, 204, 212; *Remembrance of Things Past*, transl. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York, 1981), III, 203, 209; discussion by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Epistemology of the Closet (II),” *Raritan* 8 (Summer, 1988), 102–130, and reprinted, with revisions, in this volume.

40. Anon., *De physiognomonia* 85 (vol. ii, p. 114.5–14 Förster); Vettius Valens, 2.16 (p. 76.3–8 Kroll); Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.21.3; Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 6.30.15–16 and 7.25.3–23 (esp. 7.25.5).

41. See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 43: “As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature.” See also Randolph Trumbach, “London’s Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the 18th Century,” *Journal of Social History* 11 (1977), 1–33, esp. 9; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1977), 6–8; Padgug, 13–14; Jean-Claude Féray, “Une histoire critique du mot homosexualité, [IV],” *Arcadie* 28, no. 328 (1981), 246–258, esp. 246–247; Schnapp (note 26, above), 116 (speaking of Attic vase-paintings): “One does not paint acts that characterize persons so much as behaviors that distinguish groups”; Pierre J. Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials: The Development of a Sexual Code 550–1150* (Toronto, 1984), 40–44, esp. 40–41: “there is no word in general usage in the penitentials for homosexuality as a category. . . . Furthermore, the distinction between homosexual acts and people who might be called homosexuals does not seem to be operative in these manuals” (also, pp. 14–15, 140–153); Bynum, “The Body of Christ,” 406.

42. For attestations to the strength of individual preferences (even to the point of exclusivity) on the part of Greek males for a sexual partner of one sex rather than another, see Theognis, 1367–1368; Euripides, *Cyclops* 583–584; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 7.4.7–8; Aeschines, 1.41, 195; the *Life of Zeno* by Antigonos of Carystus, cited by Athenaeus, 13.563e; the fragment of Seleucus quoted by Athenaeus, 15.697de (= *Collectanea Alexandrina*, ed. J.U. Powell [Oxford, 1925], 176); an anonymous dramatic fragment cited by Plutarch, *Moralia* 766f–767a (= *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. August Nauck, 2d ed. [Leipzig, 1926], 906, #355; also in Theodor Kock, *Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta* [Leipzig, 1880–1888], III, 467, #360); Athenaeus, 12.540e, 13.601e and ff.; Achilles Tatius, 2.35.2–3; pseudo-Lucian, *Erôtes* 9–10; Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 7.15.1–2; and a number of epigrams by various hands contained in the *Palatine Anthology*: 5.19, 65, 116, 208, 277, 278; 11.216; 12.7, 17, 41, 87, 145, 192, 198, and *passim* (cf. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, “Strato and the Musa Puerilis,” *Hermes* 100 [1972], 215–240). See, generally, Dover, 62–63; John Boswell,

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"Revolutions, Universals and Sexual Categories," in *Homosexuality: Sacrilege, Vision, Politics* (note 6, above), 89–113, esp. 98–101; Winkler, "Laying Down the Law"; and, for a list of passages, Claude Courouve, *Tableau synoptique de références à l'amour masculin: Auteurs grecs et latins* (Paris, 1986).

43. Hilary Putnam, in *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge, Eng., 1981), 150–155, in the course of analyzing the various criteria by which we judge matters of taste to be "subjective," implies that we are right to consider sexual preferences more thoroughly constitutive of the human personality than dietary preferences, but his argument remains circumscribed, as Putnam himself points out, by highly culture-specific assumptions about sex, food, and personhood.

44. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 51–52, remarks that it would be interesting to determine exactly when in the evolving course of Western cultural history sex became more morally problematic than eating; he seems to think that sex won out only at the turn of the eighteenth century, after a long period of relative equilibrium during the middle ages: see also *The Use of Pleasure*, 10; *The Care of the Self*, 143; "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2d ed. (Chicago, 1983), 229–252, esp. 229. The evidence lately assembled by Stephen Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform*, Contributions in Medical History, 4 (Westport, Conn., 1980), and by Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), suggests that moral evolution may not have been quite such a continuously linear affair as Foucault appears to imagine.

45. Jack H. Abbott, "On 'Women,'" *New York Review of Books* 28:10 (June 11, 1981), 17. It should perhaps be pointed out that this lyrical confession is somewhat at odds with the more gritty account contained in the edited excerpts from Abbott's letters that were published a year earlier in the *New York Review of Books* 27:11 (June 26, 1980), 34–37. (One might compare Abbott's statement with some remarks uttered by Bernard Boursicot in a similarly apologetic context and quoted by Richard Bernstein, "France Jails Two in a Bizarre Case of Espionage," *New York Times* [May 11, 1986]: "I was shattered to learn that he [Boursicot's lover of twenty years] is a man, but my conviction remains unshakable that for me at that time he was really a woman and was the first love of my life.")

46. See Davidson (note 6, above), 16.

47. I wish to thank Kostas Demelis for helping me with this formulation. Compare Padgug, 5: "In any approach that takes as predetermined and universal the categories of sexuality, real history disappears."

48. Stephen Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery, with Arnold I. Davidson, Ann Swidler, and Ian Watt (Stanford, 1986), 30–52, 329–332, esp. 34, makes a similar point; arguing that "a culture's sexual discourse plays a critical role in shaping individuality," he goes on to say, "It does so by helping to implant in each person an internalized set of dispositions and orientations that governs individual improvisations." See also Padgug; generally, Julian Henriques, Wendy Holloway, Cathy Urwin, Venn Couze, and Valerie Walkerdine, *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (London, 1984).

49. "Translations" (1972), lines 32–33, in Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971–1972* (New York, 1973), 40–41 (quotation on p. 41).

50. "Canzone" (1942), lines 1–2, in W.H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York, 1976), 256–257 (quotation on p. 256).