

BOOK REVIEWS



MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM and JUHA SIHVOLA, eds. *The Sleep of Reason: Erotic Experience and Sexual Ethics in Ancient Greece and Rome*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. viii + 457 pp. Paper, \$26.

The Sleep of Reason derives from a conference held at the Finnish Institute at Rome in 1997. In their introduction to the volume, the editors, Martha Nussbaum and Juha Sihvola, note that the incommensurability between sexual behavior/desire and reason was a perennial concern to ancient philosophers and that the modern discipline of philosophy has avoided this topic because of skittishness about "emotional topics" (3) and a pronounced tendency to consider ancient philosophy in a decontextualized manner. The editors accordingly have assembled a mixture of papers on ancient philosophy and other aspects of ancient culture to bring philosophical rigor and context to discussions of ancient sexual ethics. With only a third of the papers specifically about philosophy, however, the volume is more "context" than philosophy. Of greater concern, however, is their claim that the book covers both Greece and Rome. With the exception of Cantarella's discussion of Roman marriage law, Konstan's of Catullus, and Goldhill's few pages on Tertullian, substantive discussion of Latin sources is lacking. The book treats classical Greece in some detail and then skips through Greek sources to the Second Sophistic. Indeed, the failure to engage imperial Rome substantively leaves Goldhill's essay damagingly decontextualized. The editors' tendentious sketch of modern scholarship on ancient sexual behavior (7–8), which overlooks important contributions of Eva Keuls and Amy Richlin, is likewise regrettable.

In the first paper, "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality," David Halperin prescribes a proper way to investigate ancient sexual activity. Beginning with a discussion of Michel Foucault's famous statement on the progress from sodomy ("a category of forbidden acts") to the homosexual ("a life form . . . a species"), Halperin persuasively argues that Foucault's statement has been misunderstood as social history when it is better regarded "as a claim about the internal logic and systematic functioning of two different discursive styles of sexual disqualification" (28). Elsewhere, however, Halperin's disciplining zeal is wearisome. Opposing the terms *deviant sexual morphology* and *deviant sexual subjectivity* (the former deviance in gender presentation and the latter identity based on sexual activity), Halperin predictably asserts that the *cinaedus* possessed a deviant sexual morphology whose non-normative sexual behavior sprang from innate effeminacy. According to ideology recoverable from the sources, this is correct. Consideration of the *cinaedus latens* (from Firmicus

Maternus; see below), to take an example, brings up a question: what are we to make of this *cinaedus* if "the *kinaidos*'s betrayal of his masculine gender identity was so spectacular as to brand him a deviant type of person and to inscribe his deviant identity all over his face and body" (34)? Caution is called for here; discourse surely produces less schematic results (see, e.g., Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 [1978], 96, or Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* [1990], 28).

In "Erōs and Ethical Norms: Philosophers Respond to a Cultural Dilemma," Nussbaum surveys different approaches to the uneasy coexistence of sexual desire and education in pederastic relationships: if *erōs* is about loss of control in the face of desire, will the *erōmenos* be cared for properly or merely be the means for desire's satisfaction? Nussbaum compares Socrates' explication of a "generous madness," wherein reverence and gratitude inspire kindly care, to the Stoics' valuation of friendship undertaken with consummate self-control. Nussbaum's work here has considerable value in its explication of the Stoic position and in her conclusion on the usefulness of analysis of ancient philosophic responses to *erōs* in current debates about sexuality (86–87).

The next two papers, Maarit Kaimio's "Erotic Experience in the Conjugal Bed: Good Wives in Greek Tragedy" and Stephen Halliwell's "Aristophanic Sex: The Erotics of Shamelessness," take us to the Athenian stage. Starting from the observation that words for "bed" in tragic vocabulary can refer to a sexual partner, Kaimio analyzes the use of these words, concludes that the tragedians portray their married heroines as having satisfying sex lives, and tentatively connects these portrayals to the sexuality of actual Athenian wives (113). It is not clear to me that a prior satisfying sex life much matters given the extreme situations besetting most of these heroines. In a paper focused on the *Acharnians* and *Ecclesiazusae*, Halliwell argues for a more nuanced approach to sexual behavior in the plays than is usual. Rather than trying to find a consistent explication of the Athenian sex/gender system in the developments that ensue, for example, from Praxagora's suggestion of sexual communism, Halliwell effectively argues that the outcome is more a working out of the grotesque (according to Aristophanes) results of feminine libido triumphant.

In "The Legend of the Sacred Band," David Leitaο questions the historical reality of the Theban Sacred Band of lovers and beloveds. Leitaο shows that the historical basis of the *hieros lochos* is in protreptic writings that used it to explain, exemplify, and exhort. While Leitaο's persuasive argumentation may disappoint those of us who want the Sacred Band to be real, the protreptic use of the Sacred Band in ancient discourse is a suitable consolation prize.

A. W. Price considers the tension between pedagogy and pederasty in "Plato, Zeno, and the Object of Love." Contrasting Plato's approach to this tension in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* with later Stoic approaches, Price notes that Plato ultimately does not make a unity of pedagogy and pederasty. While Plato occasionally makes a connection between the transcendent beauty of the forms and its contingent, passing appearance in a beautiful mortal body, Price rightly perceives that the connection is much less important than the break that

appears between them (180–81). The desire commencing the pedagogical and pederastic project, as stubbornly carnal, always threatens to take the pedagogy out of pederasty. The Stoics, on the other hand, posit a sort of *synaesthesia* that makes potential for virtue perceptible through sight (e.g., 186–87, 190). Just as sight is the author of desire, so then it sees virtue's potential too. This coincidence nicely explains the Stoic propensity to keep *erōmenoi* after the beard had arrived; the acquisition of virtue and the creation of a person worthy of friendship took time (for the goal of *erōs* for the Stoics is to make friends).

In "Aristotle on Sex and Love," Juha Sihvola makes a generally welcome reconstruction of Aristotle's views on *erōs* from stray mentions in various Aristotelian works. Sihvola shows that Aristotle's approach to desire and sexual ethics has much in common with popular morality and Plato. Sihvola unconvincingly asserts, however, that Aristotle's remarks can be seen as applicable to either pederastic or heterosexual sex; the fourth-century context surely presupposes pederastic contacts. And, in his discussion of Aristotle's notion that habitual passivity's genesis is in childhood abuse (*Nicomachean Ethics* 7.5), Sihvola bizarrely admits that he does "not find [this passage] very important from the viewpoint of sexual ethics" (217). The importance of the passage to sexual ethics should have been manifest.

In "Two Women of Samos," Kenneth Dover analyzes an epigram by Asclepiades (*AP* 5.207). In this epigram, the narrative voice accuses and curses two women for deserting Aphrodite for things "not beautiful" (*mē kala*). Surveying inscriptions and literary evidence (Plato, Aristophanes, other writers of epigram, Callimachus) and discussing the visibility and approval accorded pederastic relationships, Dover suggests that the anger in the narrative voice stems from the women's "crime" of having sex that devalues the phallus, for *ta aphrodisia* require a penis. Dover bases this speculative conclusion on understanding the relative silence about lesbianism as a function of male anxiety. (I take exception to the use of the word "sodomy" for anal intercourse on 223. How is this word usable in non-Judaean-Christian contexts?)

Halperin's "The First Homosexuality?" is an extended critique of Bernadette Brooten's 1996 *Love between Women*. After praising Brooten, Halperin questions what he sees as her too-ready propensity to see current formations of lesbianism in ancient evidence. At times he has a point. Brooten's use of the term "sexual orientation" (see, e.g., *Love between Women*, 140), which implies a social persona and subjectivity based in large part on sexual behavior, should have been avoided. But, when he questions Brooten's use of the terms "sexual contact," "sexual relations," and "homosexualism," finding in each, respectively, sociological, forensic, and psychiatric overtones that supposedly disqualify them for investigation into ancient sexual behavior (238–39), he is over fine. Furthermore, Halperin's rejection of Brooten's assertion that long-term homosexual orientation is to be found in astrology (e.g., Firmicus Maternus's *viragines*) is not supported by the evidence. Proper appreciation for the breadth of Firmicus's objectives (see, e.g., *Mathesis* 2.20.13) disallows Halperin's confident imaging of

Firmicus's *virago* as merely a "social actor"; she very well could have a long-term erotic orientation. Besides, what sort of "social actor" would one of Firmicus's *cinaedi latentes* be?

In "Marriage and Sexuality in Republican Rome: A Roman Conjugal Love Story," Eva Cantarella analyzes Cato the Younger's bestowal of his wife Martia on Hortensius so she could give Hortensius children. Cantarella discusses this story in relation to the progress from *manus* marriage to marriage that left the bride in the control of her birth family (which neatly explains why, when Hortensius asked Cato for Martia's hand, Cato went to Martia's father to ask for permission [274]). Cantarella sees Roman marriage as a function of a father's familial ambitions and as directed toward the getting of children (important for succession and required by law from the late Republic on). Cantarella nicely marshals the evidence to show how the expectations for marriage could create a situation that looks decidedly odd to us now. (This paper needed better proofreading.)

In "The Incomplete Feminism of Musonius Rufus, Platonist, Stoic, and Roman," Nussbaum analyzes in detail two of Musonius Rufus's works, *Should Daughters and Sons Get the Same Education?* and *That Women Too Should Do Philosophy*, both of which seemingly promise equality for women. But, as her title suggests, Nussbaum argues that Musonius is ultimately conservative and faithful to his male Roman audience. Nussbaum also carefully charts the complex interplay between the Roman (conservative), Stoic (complacent), and Platonic (idealizing) elements in these works. This well-argued analysis does precisely what it sets out to do. (Nussbaum also has helpfully appended her translations of the two works and of excerpts from others.)

J. Samuel Houser's "*Erōs* and *Aphrodisia* in the Works of Dio Chrysostom" argues that Dio did not find all male-male sex philosophically indefensible. Houser is taking exception to recent scholarship by D. A. Russell (1992) and Simon Swain (1996), which says he did. Houser asserts that Dio subscribes to the argument, familiar in philosophical literature, that the goal in sex (*philia* is good, pleasure is bad), and not the activity itself, was worth consideration. While the corrective to Swain and Russell is welcome, there is not much here that seems new. Greater care in terminology also should have been exercised. When Houser says that Dio does not condemn "male-male relations per se," the referent is most assuredly not all possible male-male relations but rather pederastic relations (347). This imprecision is maddening, given Dio's opposition to adult-male passivity (344, 346).

In a wide-ranging essay, "Enacting *Erōs*," David Konstan considers the way real people (and gods) would have loved under the ancient sexual ideology of dominance and submission. From the need for a macho god to soften his fierce demeanor (Lucian) to the reversals that can characterize a pederastic relationship (Catullus), the desire for love can lead to a situation where he who is supposed to dominate may find himself dominated; players locked nominally into one or other position change positions and see each other in different ways. Konstan convincingly relates society-wide ideology to careful explications of

interpersonal dynamics in his sources to suggest how the ancient sexual system might have been lived.

In "The Erotic Experience of Looking: Cultural Conflict and the Gaze in Empire Culture," Simon Goldhill is interested more in the peripheries of empire and their marginalization than in sexual ethics or erotic experience. That said, in the case of Achilles Tatius and Clement of Alexandria, Goldhill connects a theorization of vision (explicitly connected to *erōs*) to subject formation on the empire's periphery that opposes itself to the center in Rome. Neither of these discussions, however, brings enough of Rome into view for us to understand precisely what is at issue. In his discussion of Tertullian's *De Spectaculis*, Goldhill finds contradiction in Tertullian's imaging of the divine punishment of the Christian-persecuting Romans as a gladiatorial *ludus*. Tertullian's eagerly visualized punishment of his oppressors may entail contradiction in Goldhill's eyes, but I suspect the transcendence of God will authenticate the propriety of this particular vision. Indeed, the mastery of this contradiction is proof of God's power as Tertullian discovers a new way to see.

The volume concludes with a lucid analysis of ancient love magic, "Agents and Victims: Constructions of Gender and Desire in Ancient Greek Love Magic," by Christopher A. Faraone. Faraone's analysis reveals that ancient erotic spells create gendered roles for agents and victims that are independent of the actual biological sex of the persons involved. Faraone also discovers convincing evidence of a "misandrist" discourse (a term he credits to John Winkler) to put alongside the discourse of misogyny. According to the spells, women are chaste and loyal, and men are neither. The evidence from these spells, then, convincingly suggests a coexistence of both misogyny and misandry in the ancient world.

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CRAIG A. GIBSON. *Interpreting a Classic: Demosthenes and His Ancient Commentators*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002. xii + 261 pp. Cloth, \$55.

This book aims to provide a comprehensive account of the ancient scholarship on Demosthenes. Gibson points out that Demosthenes was widely read in later antiquity, and this created the need for linguistic and historical commentaries on his speeches. Of these, some have partially survived on papyrus, while excerpts have also been preserved in later lexicographers and the Byzantine scholia found in the margins of Demosthenic manuscripts. The purpose of Gibson's study is to clarify some confusing and difficult issues related to the ancient scholarship on Demosthenes and to provide the text and commentary on the main sources.