Editor's Introduction

> In the beginning there were three sexes, not just the two sexes, the male and the female, as at present; there was a third kind that shared the characteristics of the other two, and whose name survives, even though the thing itself has disappeared. For at that time one was androgynous in form and shared its name with both the male and the female.
>
> Plato, *Symposium*

This humorous creation myth by the comic poet Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* illustrates how keenly issues of gender and sexuality preoccupied classical authors and their audiences. It also suggests, if only for the sake of amusement, how such issues could be detached from the fact of biological difference even in antiquity. This book invites undergraduate students to reflect on the lives of ancient women and the social and political forces that shaped them. It also attempts to provide a sense of the evolution of gender studies within the discipline of classics and the different methodologies and approaches used by classical scholars. Finally, the volume encourages readers to consider gender and sexuality in classical antiquity as culturally determined, socially constructed categories, thereby increasing awareness of the assumptions and processes at work in the formation of modern concepts of gender.

While many excellent anthologies address the subject of women in antiquity (see References and Further Reading at the end of this introduction), most do not deal at all with constructions of sexuality and gender. This volume seeks to address this problem by including essays not

only about the status and representation of women but also those concerned with sexuality and masculinity in the Greco-Roman world. Moreover, all of the essays contained in this volume, or their authors, have played a formative role in shaping the field of ancient gender studies. As discussed more fully below, research on women in antiquity has undergone several transformations since its inception as a subfield of classical studies in the early 1970s. Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, especially the two volumes that deal with classical antiquity first translated into English in 1985 and 1986, has had a major impact on how classicists view the study of women, gender, masculinity, and sexuality in the ancient world. Many of the essays contained in this volume have been in some way influenced by Foucault; while some self-consciously position themselves *against* him, others show a debt to structuralist, psychoanalytic, feminist, and anthropological theories. They cover a range of genres, including lyric and epic poetry, tragedy, philosophical prose, history, medical writings, and inscriptions.

The Study of Women in Antiquity: A Brief History

Interest in the status of women in classical antiquity extends back to the nineteeth century, when "woman" as a conceptual category, isolated from the rest of history, became the focus of scientific and positivist inquiry (Blok 1987: 2–3); not coincidentally, most of the modern academic disciplines, including classics, were delineated during this same period. Nineteenth-century positivist scholars examined not only the images of women found in poetic texts, but also studied their social position in numerous juridical, philosophical, and historical tracts from antiquity. Such thinking informed one well-known nineteenth-century German treatise on ancient women: Johann Bachofen's *MutterRecht* ("Mother Right"; an English translation of this work is given in the References) articulated stages of cultural development in which women reacted to an original communal society in which individual family ties and property rights were not sufficiently delimited. Their rebellion, Bachofen proposed, led to a new stage which recognized the primary human bond as that between mother and child; in this new development, fertility and femininity became the predominant subjects of religion until supplanted by patriarchy (Blok 1987: 29). Bachofen's views reflected a second strand of nineteenth-century thought, romantic idealism. However, just like positivism, this approach also isolated women as a separate cultural category, an idea that influenced the scholarship on women in classical antiquity until the late 1960s.

The publication of a special edition of the classics journal *Arethusa* (vol. 6, no. 1, 1973) in the early 1970s stimulated the rapid growth of the study of women in antiquity in the United States (Peradotto and Sullivan 1984).[1] The subsequent publication of Sarah Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* in 1975 had a profound and lasting impact on the study of women in antiquity both in the scholarly community and in the classroom. Pomeroy wondered "what the women were doing while men were active in all the areas traditionally emphasized by classical scholars" (Pomeroy 1975: ix). In her view, one later contested by Blok (1987), major works of ancient history simply omitted "women" as a social category. Pomeroy thus set out to recover the lives of ancient women even in the face of the acute challenges posed by the primary sources, most of which were written by men for a male audience. She observed that literary sources such as plays and epic do not bear a close correspondence to everyday life, although they may shed light on how ancient cultures conceptualized women. Rather, other types of texts, history, biography, letters, and legal works, as well as visual materials and papyri, can more accurately illuminate the daily lives of ancient women, particularly the elite. The observation that noncanonical texts may provide significant information on women in classical world is further reflected in many of the essays and sources selected for this volume.

Following the publication of Pomeroy's book, several new collections of essays devoted to the subject of women in antiquity appeared in the United States. *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, edited by Helene Foley and published in 1981, grew out of a special issue of the journal *Women's Studies* and represented the first collection of essays on women in the ancient world to be published in a major women's studies journal. Another early anthology brought a wide range of perspectives to the study of women in the ancient world: Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt's *Images of Women in Antiquity* had a comparative purpose, providing material on women from many different ancient societies, including Greece, Rome, the Near East, and historical periods, ranging from the classical world to early Christian and Jewish thought and the medieval era. In combination with the special editions of *Arethusa*, these collections facilitated the teaching of university-level courses on women in antiquity in the United States, many of which adopted the outline provided by Pomeroy in the 1973 special edition of *Arethusa*. A National Endowment for the Humanities seminar on Women in Classical Antiquity, held at Hunter College in the summer of 1983, led to the creation of "Women in Classical Antiquity: Four Curricular Modules," a pamphlet widely circulated in the United

States that also became the basis for Fantham et al.'s textbook, *Women in the Classical World* (discussed below). Finally, the publication of Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen Fant's *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* in 1982 made available a wide range of ancient sources on women, some never before published in English.

Whereas Pomeroy, as the scholars before her, concentrated on reconstructing the real-life circumstances of women's lives, other scholars considered the conceptual structures that informed the literary and mythical representation of women, and how they intersected with social and political institutions. Most of this work focused on Greek rather than Roman culture, a trend that prevailed for the next two decades. Two essays from the early 1980s on women in Athenian drama, "Conception of Women in Athenian Drama" by Helene Foley (Foley 1981: 127–68) and "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama" by Froma Zeitlin, an essay included in this volume (chapter 4), shifted the focus away from recovering women's historical reality to understanding the conceptual framework behind their literary and mythic representation and its relation to the social and ideological context of democratic Athens.

Several important literary and cultural theories brought about this shift of emphasis in classical studies. Psychoanalytic theory first made an impact on classical studies in the late 1960s. Scholars influenced by psychoanalytic thought have attempted to interpret classical mythology and literature as reflecting the psychopathology of ancient cultures. Philip Slater, in his *The Glory of Hera*, first published in 1968, considers the psychological origins of gender conflict in Greek mythology through an exploration of the Heracles myth. He claims that male anxieties in classical Athenians can be traced to the mother–son relationship: the Athenian mother, confined to the home and envious of male privilege and power, vented her negative feelings on her male children, inciting them to achieve and then punishing their successes. This ambivalence resulted in overconfident and yet insecure men who both feared and hated women and who sought to compensate for their inadequacies by a tireless quest for social status. In recent years, feminist classical scholars have taken issue with strict Freudian interpretations such as Slater's, arguing that the nineteenth-century model of nuclear family used by Freud bears little resemblance to ancient family structures. Although orthodox Freudian interpretations, especially those involving outmoded concepts such as penis envy, have fallen by the wayside, elements of psychoanalytic and post-psychoanalytic theory can still be found in feminist classical scholarship.

In contrast to the psychoanalytic approach, structuralist theory has had a more enduring legacy in the field of classics. Structuralism holds that the structure of language itself produces reality; linguistic structures, not individuals, produce and determine meaning, since people can only think by means of words. Thus individuals do not make meaning, as in the romantic humanist model, rather meaning is culturally determined. A structuralist approach, therefore, examines the symbolic structures that inform a particular culture, its mental universe or imaginary, and has a synchronic rather than diachronic focus. Jean-Pierre Vernant's *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* (published in French in 1966 and translated into English in 1983) and Pierre Vidal-Naquet's *The Black Hunter* (published in French in 1981 and translated into English in 1986) inspired a generation of classical scholars to consider ancient Greek literature and culture from this new perspective. These authors combined a structuralist viewpoint with a psychoanalytic approach as they attempted to understand not only the cognitive but also the psychological systems underlying Greek myths. Another influential work, Claude Calame's *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece* (originally published in French in 1977 and translated into English in 1997), applied a structuralist approach to the study of adolescent girls in ancient Greece. Examining the "maiden songs" of the Spartan archaic poet Alcman, Calame investigated the importance of ritual choral performance for the socialization of girls in archaic Greek society.

Some scholars, especially historians of women in antiquity, have argued that the structuralist approach detaches women as subjects from their historical contexts in favor of examining "universal" thought structures and categories that presumably remain unchanged through time (Blok 1987: 40–1). Other scholars have taken issue with the structuralist tendency to rely on binary oppositions for understanding the ancient imaginary; such oppositions do not accurately reflect the actual contradictions between ideology and social practice characteristic of any society, ancient or modern (D. Cohen 1991).

The large amount of research done on women in antiquity since the 1970s has influenced how classical studies is taught in the United States and made possible the creation of the first comprehensive textbook on the subject, Fanthan et al.'s *Women in the Classical World* (1994). The book combines diachronic and synchronic approaches, collecting the most important primary sources on ancient women and placing them in their social and historical context. It shows how the study of women in antiquity has evolved from a fringe movement in the 1970s to its position within the academy, as a subject of scholarly inquiry and pedagogy.

The Study of Sexuality in the Classical World

A separate but related strand of study focuses on sexuality in classical antiquity. In the early nineteenth century, scholars such as Friedrich-Karl Forberg (1770–1848) compiled information about sexual behavior in the classical world. Forberg edited a collection of obscene epigrams that included an appendix consisting of original source material on the sexual practices of the ancient Greeks and Romans; he catalogued, among other things, over 90 sexual positions (Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990: 8–9)! Forberg, however, did not discuss homosexuality, a central feature of ancient sexual practice. Not until Paul Brandt published, under the pseudonym Hans Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece* in 1932, did the subjects of pederasty and male homoeroticism receive full treatment from a classical scholar. None of these early studies of ancient sexuality fully considered the extensive visual sources until Otto Brendel's full-length study of erotic art in 1970. Two other works critical for the study of sexuality in the ancient world quickly followed: Jeffrey Henderson's *Maculate Muse* (1975) provided a glossary of obscene language in Attic Old Comedy and discussed its significance, thereby bringing to scholarly attention a wealth of material that reflected ancient views of male and female sexuality. In 1978, Kenneth Dover published *Greek Homosexuality*, a book that examined male homoerotic practices in art and literature, providing valuable insights into an institution central to ancient Greek male life. Two specifically feminist analyses of male sexuality and its consequences for women appeared in the mid-1980s: Amy Richlin's *The Garden of Priapus*, a study of male sexual aggression in Roman humor, and Eva Keuls's *The Reign of the Phallus*, which examined male sexuality and female objectification in Athenian literature.

The study of ancient sexuality and gender was powerfully affected, and perhaps irrevocably altered, by Michel Foucault's three-volume *History of Sexuality.* Influenced in part by Dover's research on homosexuality in ancient Greece, the second two volumes, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, examine noncanonical classical texts to understand not only ancient sexual practices, but how these practices negotiated power and constructed self-identity. Foucault distinguished "gender" as a socially constructed category separate from biological sex; in his view, a culture constructs or produces gender difference through its various social discourses – from the way people dress to the laws that govern them – in order to maintain existing power structures. Gender therefore

must be understood not as an absolute category based on biological sex, but as the result of prevailing social norms and practices.

The English translation of Foucault's work in the mid-1980s inspired a number of works concerned with ancient sexuality, including Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, Winkler's *The Constraints of Desire*, and the path-breaking collection of essays, *Before Sexuality*, edited by Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin. Published in 1990, all of these books combined Foucault's theories with varying amounts of French structuralism. In the same year, David Konstan and Martha Nussbaum edited a special issue of the women's studies journal *Differences*, entitled *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society*.

Although Foucault's work resulted in an explosion of writings by classical scholars, he received a mixed reception from feminist scholars. Amy Richlin, whose essay appears as Chapter 8 in this volume, argues that Foucauldian analysis, and its subsequent incarnations, new historicism and cultural studies, erases women both as subjects and scholars (Richlin 1991). Foxhall, on the other hand, argues that Foucault's general analysis of power and its transmission through discursive practices provides an invaluable tool to feminist classicists and nonclassicists alike (Foxhall 1994; see also D. Cohen 1992; Skinner 1996). Moreover, classicists in general have argued that Foucault considers only those sources that suit his argument, ignoring many ancient discursive fields, such as that of the novel and other comic genres (Larmour, Miller, and Platter 1998: 25–6).

In addition to the awareness of gender and sexuality as socially constructed categories, another direct contribution of Foucault's work has been the recent scholarly fascination with the ancient body, a topic that has resulted in several anthologies (Wyke 1998; Porter 1999). These collections have expanded the already large number of books about women's bodies in ancient medical writings, including those of Aline Rouselle (1988), Lesley Dean-Jones (1994), Helen King (1998) and the numerous articles by Ann Ellis Hanson, such as "The Medical Writer's Woman" (Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990: 309–37). Finally, some other recent anthologies address often overlooked aspects of ancient sexuality: influenced by the work of Susanne Kappeler, the essays in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (1992), edited by Amy Richlin, apply feminist theory to Greek and Roman texts explicitly concerned with sexuality. Observing that classical scholarship, influenced by Foucault, has focused almost exclusively on Greek sexuality, editors Judy Hallett and Marilyn Skinner, in their volume *Roman Sexualities* (1997), turn their gaze to Rome.

Essays in this Volume

The essays in this volume represent a range of perspectives on women, gender, and sexuality in the ancient world. They are accessible to a general audience while at the same time challenging readers to confront problems of evidence and interpretation, new theories and methodologies, as well as their own contemporary assumptions about gender and sexuality. They also address a range of different literary genres, from ancient medical writings and inscriptions to more canonical works such as epic, lyric, elegiac, and dramatic poetry. From a pedagogical standpoint, all of the essays may be paired with a diverse array of primary sources; for example, Helen King's essay, ''Bound to Bleed,'' responds not only to ancient Greek medical writings but also to literary accounts of Artemis such as those found in Athenian drama. Moreover, the essays represent a broad spectrum of scholarly perspectives, and somewhat trace the debates and currents of the field from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. Part I (Greece) contains four essays on Greek literature and society and Part II (Rome) includes four essays on Latin literature; Part III (Classical Tradition) concludes the volume with a consideration of the Procne and Philomela myth in both Greek and Roman sources and its relevance for feminist scholars.

An attempt has been made to include perspectives not only on ancient women, but also on men and masculinity in classical antiquity. Many of the essays that deal explicitly with women and their representation also illuminate the construction of male subjectivity. Some consider similar, issues but from different angles or periods, such as King's essay on women in Hippocrates and Richlin's on Pliny. The essays by Zeitlin and Dover both aim at elucidating a larger issue, the function of gender categories in classical Athens, although they do so by exploring the different genres of drama and oratory. Winkler and Richlin, while examining very different types of sources, both deploy a similar approach drawn from women's history that views women as agents capable of resisting male systems of control rather than victims. Both Joshel and Wyke relate the literary representation of women in Roman texts to their political environment. Unfortunately, space restrictions played a much larger role than I would have liked in formulating this volume. The focus has been restricted to literary texts, even though numerous books and articles on gender, sexuality, and the visual arts have appeared in recent years (see Kampen 1996; Stewart 1997; Koloski-Ostrow and Lyons 1997; B. Cohen 2000). These constraints also compelled me to omit

many stimulating and seminal essays, some of which are included in the References and Further Reading at the end of this introduction.

To summarize the contents of the volume, it opens with an influential essay by Dover that lays out Athenian attitudes toward sexuality and serves as a good introduction to basic aspects of Athenian sexual practices and social organization. Dover discusses the seclusion and protection of reputable women, prohibitions against adultery and sexual relations outside marriage, including prostitution and homosexuality, the value placed on virginity for both males and females, and the relation of homoerotic behavior to political life and social status. Because this essay focuses mostly on fourth-century prose, including oratory and philosophy, it has been paired with an excerpt from Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* about the origins of the two sexes.

Winkler's reading of Sappho situates a female voice in a discursive universe created and transmitted by men. He shows how Sappho's poetry appropriates traditional heroic and masculine vocabulary to articulate a private, feminine world. But in contrast to the univocal narrative of the Homeric tradition, these poems reflect multiple perspectives and shifting identifications. This "many-mindedness," Winkler suggests, reflects the difficulties encountered by women in a male-dominated culture in which they are forced to become bilingual, proficient both in the culture of the linguistic minority and in the majority language of men. This essay represents one approach to women's history that views women as agents rather than as victims, empowered by their own subculture and thus capable of resisting male control. Translations of two of Sappho's poems accompany this piece, and two passages from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to which they are compared.

King explores the meaning of female virginity, a topic also briefly addressed by Dover, in ancient Greek thought and myth. She begins with the premise that the concept of woman for the Greeks always involved ambiguity. Focusing on a short medical treatise entitled *Peri Partheniôn* (On Unmarried Girls), King draws on structuralist theory to analyze the role of the goddess Artemis in the female life cycle, especially menstruation. The treatise elucidates the importance of menstruation and pregnancy for female health: the inability to menstruate, in Hippocrates' view, induces disease and even madness. King then explores the contradictory functions of Artemis in female life: she does not bleed but governs bleeding transitions; she both binds, causing suffocation and strangulation, and releases, thereby facilitating childbirth. These two contrary motions provide a conceptual framework for understanding the meanings of female transitions in ancient Greek culture. A translation of the Hippocratic treatise and

a passage from Euripides' *Hippolytus* concerning virginity conclude the chapter.

While King focuses primarily on fifth-century medical writing, Zeitlin provides another perspective on the male representation of women in a different but contemporary literary genre, that of Athenian tragedy. Influenced by social anthropology and structuralist and psychoanalytic theory, Zeitlin analyzes how tragedy constructs and deconstructs categories of masculine and feminine. She argues for tragedy as a feminizing genre that functions as an "initiatory process" with the ultimate purpose of strengthening male civic identity. Athenian tragedy thus exploits the female as an Other through which the male spectator comes to understand himself. In the theater of Dionysus, female characters serve as a vehicle for exploring the "male project of selfhood." Passages that illustrate some of Zeitlin's discussion follow the essay, including Deianira's speech announcing her intention to restore her husband's love by means of magic and Heracles' final condemnation of her in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, and the metatheatrical scene of cross-dressing in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

Like the Dover essay in Part I, Finley's piece offers a general introduction to the study of women – although not sexual behaviour – in Roman society. The essay emphasizes the problems facing social historians who attempt to study Roman women, since they appear only in male authors predisposed to the "salacious and scandalous." Finley traces the problem to the Roman practice of denying women social subjectivity: they lacked individual names in the proper sense and their virtues – beauty, evenness of temperament, chastity, and childbearing – served to reinforce the male-governed *familia*. Only religion provided an outlet for Roman women's energies and talents. The essay has been paired with a range of Roman funerary inscriptions for departed wives and daughters that highlight the traditional female virtues and even praise some non-traditional ones.

Observing that Livy's history of Rome is full of raped, dead, or absent women, such as Tarpeia and the Sabines, Joshel examines the role played by violence against women in Roman myths of foundation. She focuses on Lucretia, a virtuous wife raped by an arrogant king, who commits suicide to protect her reputation and to provide a public lesson about female chastity, and on Verginia, a daughter killed by her father to defend her from the threat of rape. Joshel seeks to understand why each of these stories precedes or catalyzes a revolutionary moment in the political prehistory of Rome. Influenced by Theweleit's *Male Fantasies* (see *Works Cited* in Chapter 7), an account of masculinist ideology in Nazi Germany, she juxtaposes images of violence against women in Rome, Nazi Germany, and the contemporary United States to interrogate repre-

sentations of gender in the formation and destruction of empires. The women in these texts therefore comment not only on the status of women in Roman society, but also on the Roman construction of manhood. A translation of Livy's account of Lucretia from *The Founding of Rome* accompanies the essay.

Wyke addresses more fully the question of the relation between literary representation and social reality raised earlier by Finley in connection with Roman women. Her essay also fruitfully engages with the issue of compromised masculinity raised by Zeitlin, albeit from the angle of the mistress, or *puella domina*, of Latin love elegy. Focusing on the figure of Cynthia in Propertius, Wyke attempts to "read through" the poems to a living woman as a means of elucidating the difficulties of relating women in texts to women in society. She argues that Cynthia's representation is inextricably bound to issues of poetic practice: although realistically drawn, Cynthia as mistress is a poetic fiction that conforms to the requirements of the elegiac genre, related not to the life of the poet, but to the "grammar" of his poetry. At the same time, Wyke shows how this literary construction engages with contemporary political discourses on women in the early Empire. The essay is paired with translations of Propertius 1.8a-b and 2.5 as well as a passage from Cicero's *Pro Caelio* on another notorious mistress, Clodia, the real-life lover of the poet Catullus.

Richlin's analysis of Pliny the Elder's treatise on the curative and harmful powers of the products of the female body in his encyclopedic *Natural History*, especially breast milk and menstrual fluid, concludes the Roman section. This essay examines some rather obscure material, "a little-known wilderness" that could be characterized as folk medicine, to understand Roman ideas about female sexuality; in doing so, it engages directly with work on women in the Greek medical writers, such as that of King. Pliny's text considers the mundane aspects of female life, including menstruation, fertility, contraception, abortion, aphrodisiacs, pregnancy, childbirth, and infant care, topics of little interest to the Roman poets. She shows how Pliny's discussion attributes a dangerous power to the female body and its reproductive capacity that reveals how deeply ambivalent the Romans felt about women. Richlin argues that Pliny can serve as starting point for two different approaches to women's history, one that views women as the victims of male oppression, the other that sees them as agents able to subvert the male system. In the former view, Pliny reinforces ideas about Roman society as an oppressive patriarchy; in the latter, he shows the fundamental power this society attributed to women and their bodies. The essay concludes with a translation of the relevant passage from Pliny's *Natural History.*

In the final essay, Joplin examines the myth of Philomela, a woman raped and then brutally silenced by her sister's husband, and its meanings for feminist scholars. The tragic poet Sophocles coined the phrase, "the voice of the shuttle," to refer to the tapestry that Philomela wove to tell her story. Joplin critiques the appropriation of this phrase by a male scholar to celebrate male literary creation rather than "the violated woman's emergence from silence." By beginning with this critique, Joplin shows the reader how traditional critics reinforce the cultural assumptions of the texts they interpret. Approaching Ovid's version of the myth from a structuralist perspective, she demonstrates how such classical myths, even violent ones, may empower feminist critics. For example, the Philomela myth posits woman as an agent who shapes her own destiny, as an artist and creator, while the successful weaving stratagem shows the ultimate failure of male domination. Readings that resist traditional interpretations may therefore rescue classical sources for feminist scholars and writers. The essay concludes with a selection from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that tells the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela.

NOTE

1 According to Hawley and Levick 1995: 13, the first international conference on women in the ancient world was not held in the UK until 1993.

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