



SEX

ANTIQUITY & ITS LEGACY

图书馆

DANIEL ORRELLS

I.B. TAURIS

ANCIENTS AND MODERNS

SEX ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY

DANIEL ORRELLS

I.B. TAURIS

LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2015 by
I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
London • New York
www.ibtauris.com

Copyright © 2015 Daniel Orrells

The right of Daniel Orrells to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by the author in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

References to websites were correct at the time of writing.

ISBN: (HB): 978 1 84885 519 9

ISBN: (PB): 978 1 84885 520 5

eISBN: 978 0 85773 950 6

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

Typeset in Garamond Pro by Ellipsis Digital Limited, Glasgow
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY



ANCIENTS AND MODERNS

General Editor: Phiroze Vasunia, Professor of Greek, University College London

How can antiquity illuminate critical issues in the modern world? How does the ancient world help us address contemporary problems and issues? In what ways do modern insights and theories shed new light on the interpretation of ancient texts, monuments, artefacts and cultures? The central aim of this exciting new series is to show how antiquity is relevant to life today. The series also points towards the ways in which the modern and ancient worlds are mutually connected and interrelated. Lively, engaging, and historically informed, *Ancients and Moderns* examines key ideas and practices in context. It shows how societies and cultures have been shaped by ideas and debates that recur. With a strong appeal to students and teachers in a variety of disciplines, including classics and ancient history, each book is written for non-specialists in a clear and accessible manner.

THE ART OF THE BODY: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • MICHAEL SQUIRE

DEATH: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • MARIO ERASMO

DRAMA: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • DAVID ROSENBLOOM

GENDER: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • BROOKE HOLMES

LUCK, FATE AND FORTUNE: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • ESTHER EIDINOW

MEDICINE: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • CAROLINE PETIT

POLITICS: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • KOSTAS VLASSOPOULOS

RACE: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • DENISE EILEEN McCOSKEY

RELIGION: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • JÖRG RÜPKE

SCIENCE: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • PHILIPPA LANG

SEX: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • DANIEL ORRELLS

SLAVERY: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • PAGE DUBOIS

WAR: ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY • ALFRED S. BRADFORD

ISBN: 978-1-84885-200-6 • www.ancientsandmoderns.com

‘It may seem that physical sex has no history. (The human race does it, and needs to do it, and has always done it.) But actually there is a real need to consider how the very conceptualization of sex itself has changed, with its different boundaries, constructions and anxieties. Daniel Orrells’ intelligent, coherent and intellectually exciting book offers just such a consideration. He takes the somewhat stagnant debate about ancient sexuality in a wholly new and profitable direction, and in so doing gives the field a real shake-up. Orrells is an excellent scholar and writes with wit and verve. In placing the history of the sexual act alongside the ideology of the body, of the person and of agency, his important – but never self-important – book has the potential to break out to a very wide readership.’

Simon Goldhill, Professor of Greek Literature and Culture,
University of Cambridge

‘This is a spectacular book – learned, provocative, witty, highly readable and tightly argued. Daniel Orrells complicates and complements the arguments of Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, showing that the sexual lives of the Greeks and Romans, however different from our own, are nonetheless central to modern notions of sexuality, sexual identity, and gender expression. Starting in the Renaissance, Orrells demonstrates that the reception of ancient Greek and Roman literature played a key role in the development of the psycho-analytic understanding of sexuality; that classical scholars, poets, and eventually nineteenth-century sexologists turned to “the classics” for vocabularies and methods of knowing about sex, and of thinking about sex as a form of knowing. This book is immensely informative and delightful to read, presenting complex debates in lucid, playful prose.’

Kirk Ormand, Professor of Classics, Oberlin College, author of
Controlling Desires: Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome

DANIEL ORRELLS is Reader in Classics and Ancient History at the University of Warwick. He is author of *Classical Culture and Modern Masculinity* (2011), co-editor of *African Athena: New Agendas* (2011), and author of a number of essays and articles on classical antiquity in modern intellectual history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking the two anonymous readers and Phiroze Vasunia, Series Editor, who all ploughed through and fastidiously critiqued an earlier draft of this book, liberally offering their knowledge for my consideration. Audiences at Cambridge, Durham, Oxford and London, and UC Davis and UC Irvine have provided me with further food for thought. These readers and listeners have, I hope, transformed and improved my work. I greatly appreciate the professionalism of Alex Wright and his team at I.B.Tauris. Denise Cowle has been a highly efficient and attentive copy-editor. This book could not have been written without the generosity and intelligence of good friends and interlocutors. Katie Fleming, Annelise Friesenbruch and Miriam Leonard have all been there through the process. I must likewise cite dear companions, Tasha Marhia and Amanda Tidman, as well as Tessa Roynon and Carl Hall, and Alistair Johnston, James Mack and Ben Winyard: thanks for keeping me buoyant, bright and breezy. Thank you also Jayne and Brian Orrells for all your love and support, and Kate Orrells for moving to a new sunnier world, right by Preston Park! To Rohan McCooty: 'Sagt es niemand, nur den Weisen, weil die Menge gleich verhöhnet'. Finally, I would like to record my gratitude to and appreciation of Aude Doody, whose warmth and wisdom in life *and* Latin literature have brought this book to its completion.

The context for much of my writing of this book was Berlin, Germany. I was kindly supported financially by an Alexander von Humboldt

SEX: ANTIQVITY AND ITS LEGACY

Foundation Fellowship, under which scheme I was welcomed to the Winckelmann Institut under the auspices of Professor Luca Giuliani. I was also generously granted research leave by the University of Warwick.

FOREWORD

Ancients and Moderns comes to fruition at a propitious moment: 'reception studies' is flourishing, and the scholarship that has arisen around it is lively, rigorous, and historically informed; it makes us rethink our own understanding of the relationship between past and present. *Ancients and Moderns* aims to communicate to students and general readers the depth, energy, and excitement of the best work in the field. It seeks to engage, provoke, and stimulate, and to show how, for large parts of the world, Greco-Roman antiquity continues to be relevant to debates in culture, politics, and society.

The series does not merely accept notions such as 'reception' or 'tradition' without question; rather, it treats these concepts as contested categories and calls into question the illusion of an unmediated approach to the ancient world. We have encouraged our authors to take intellectual risks in the development of their ideas. By challenging the assumption of a direct line of continuity between antiquity and modernity, these books explore how discussions in such areas as gender, politics, race, sex, and slavery occur within particular contexts and histories; they demonstrate that no culture is monolithic, that claims to ownership of the past are never pure, and that East and West are often connected together in ways that continue to surprise and disturb many. Thus, *Ancients and Moderns* is intended to stir up debates about and within reception studies and to complicate some of the standard narratives about the 'legacy' of Greece and Rome.

SEX: ANTIQVITY AND ITS LEGACY

All the books in *Ancients and Moderns* illustrate that *how* we think about the past bears a necessary relation to *who* we are in the present. At the same time, the series also seeks to persuade scholars of antiquity that their own pursuit is inextricably connected to what many generations have thought, said, and done about the ancient world.

Phiroze Vasunia

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | vii |
| FOREWORD (<i>by Phiroze Vasunia</i>) | ix |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Classical antiquity and the history of sexuality | 1 |
| CHAPTER I: SEX, LATIN AND RENAISSANCE HUMANISM: ‘A PRECIOUS STONE IN A PILE OF DIJING’ | 21 |
| The difficulty of reading epigrams | 23 |
| How to read Beccadelli? | 34 |
| CHAPTER II: THE SATYRA SCOTADICA AND THE EROTICS OF LATINITY | 38 |
| A man’s world? | 40 |
| Battle of the sexes | 44 |
| Chorier’s protean Latin | 54 |
| CHAPTER III: SEXUAL ENLIGHTENMENT? FROM ARCHAEOLOGY TO SCIENCE | 65 |
| The nature of the phallus | 66 |
| The priapic scholar | 73 |

SEX: ANTIQVITY AND ITS LEGACY

| | |
|--|-----|
| Sexual medicine | 80 |
| Sex, science and the classics | 88 |
| CHAPTER IV: SEXOLOGY, HISTORICISM AND ANCIENT GREECE | 100 |
| It's all Greek to me . . . | 102 |
| Knowing about ancient Greece | 109 |
| CHAPTER V: FROM THE TRIBAD TO SAPPHO | 126 |
| Female traditions and Greek pederasty for women? | 130 |
| So many Sapphos | 141 |
| CHAPTER VI: FREUD'S CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY | 152 |
| History and myth | 154 |
| Anthologies of desire: from the hermaphrodite to the phallic mother | 168 |
| Authority and desire | 181 |
| SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING | 188 |
| NOTES | 220 |
| INDEX | 242 |

INTRODUCTION

Classical antiquity and the history of sexuality

Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* has not only been at the centre of debates in classical scholarship for almost 30 years, but has also ensured that the study of the ancient world has become central to the study of gender history and the history of sexuality more generally. His *Histoire* has ensured that understanding ancient sexual norms and transgressions has become a profoundly important project for understanding *today's* rights and wrongs of sexual behaviour. And yet, because Foucault and some of those historians who have followed him have been so eager to emphasise the ruptures and discontinuities in the history of sexuality (the historically constructed nature of our experiences of desire and passion), the reception of Foucault's work has often become a battle between those 'constructivists' who have supported and qualified his work and those others, called 'essentialists', who have continually debated whether we can historicise sexual desire. *Sex: Antiquity and its Legacy* does not propose to intervene in these debates directly. Rather than try to suggest that ancient and modern sexualities are somehow fundamentally the same, or somehow fundamentally different, this book contends that the reception of classical antiquity was at the heart of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century systematisation and taxonomisation of sexuality; a cultural landscape which we still inhabit today. This book will argue that sexology and psychoanalysis emerged out of a longer history of modern writings since the Renaissance, which turned

back to the ancient world to understand the nature of sexual desire. Rather than attempt a history of 'real-life' sexual practices and behaviours, this book will argue that the emergence of scientific discourses in the nineteenth century, which sought to turn sexual desire into an object of knowledge, came from a history of writings interested in what it might mean to know about sex.

Between 1976 and 1984, Michel Foucault, the French historian, philosopher and political activist, published a trilogy of books called *Histoire de la sexualité*, which ensured that modern sexuality could not be understood without thinking about ancient Greek and Roman societies. In the first volume, *La Volonté de savoir* (translated as *The Will to Knowledge*), Foucault argued that the history of sexuality should not be viewed in terms of a pattern of a period of expressive liberalism succeeded by an era of repression, which eventually bubbled over into another period of sexual permissiveness. While many historians writing prior to Foucault in the 1960s drew up this morphology, Foucault himself was very critical of this model, which he called the 'repressive hypothesis'.¹ Such historiography, Foucault saw, was often a product of the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s: freedom of sexual expression led to historians writing more openly and frequently about sex, with the presumption that the historical moment in which they were writing was more liberated than the Victorian age that had preceded them. Many counter-cultural movements of the 1960s had stressed that political emancipation was best embodied in sexual liberation: if one knew the truth about one's sexuality, if one was freed from old-fashioned, prudish mores and constraints, one could, it was argued, be more truly oneself.² But knowing yourself (be it through organised women's groups which sought to talk positively and openly about female sexual pleasure, or the ritual of coming out as a gay person in the context of a homophobic community) did not always seem so revolutionary to Foucault. Rather, the will to know one's sexuality in the 1960s was actually the latest chapter in a longer history of knowing about sexual desires and pleasures, which Foucault dated back to the mid- to late-Victorian period. Just as other historians sought to distinguish the 1960s from the repressive nineteenth century, so

Foucault perceived a fundamental historical continuity: the sexual revolution had emerged out of that previous period. The diverse clusters of sexualities which affirmed themselves from the 1960s through the 1980s were identities that had already more or less been demarcated and described by certain nineteenth-century legal and medical texts. As Foucault argued in *The Will to Knowledge*, the Victorian period was not one that cast a curtain over the subject of sexuality. Certain nineteenth-century states across Western Europe did bring in legislation against same-sex sexual practices, and nineteenth-century churches certainly were very influential over the sexual behaviours of their congregations. And yet, this historical period, Foucault argued, witnessed an explosive proliferation of debate about sexuality. The nineteenth century, it seemed, couldn't stop discussing sex. Indeed, Foucault went further than that: the nineteenth century *invented* the notion that one had a sexuality – that in a sense one simply *is* one's sexual preference. The idea that the sex of the person with whom one has sex should determine the identity category that one inhabits is an idea, Foucault thought, that originated at this time. And for Foucault, the invention of the category of the 'homosexual' most clearly evidenced this historical process. These are the words in which Foucault famously put it:

As defined by the ancient civil of 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, a childhood. [...] [His sexuality] 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. [...] [T]he psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized – [Carl Otto] Westphal's famous article of 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations' can stand as its date of birth – less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself.

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.³

Now, Foucault seems to be saying here that the homosexual as such came into existence in the year 1870 CE . . . a remarkably strange claim to make, since it seems obvious that certain men and women have always enjoyed sexual relations with their own sex. But Foucault was not actually making such a case. Rather, he argued for a 'veritable discursive explosion' in the discussion of sex, using a specifically authorised vocabulary that codified where one could talk about it and with whom. He suggested that this desire to talk about sex emerged from the ritualised confession of the Roman Catholic Church, which called for its followers to admit to their sinful desires and actions. At the same time, civil and canonical codes drawn up by state rulers outlined strict guidelines around sexual practices inside and outside marriage: adultery was particularly heavily punished in medieval and early-modern societies as wealthy and powerful families sought to maintain their hold over feudal structures. By the start of the eighteenth century, the control that religious authorities had over the discourse about sexual pleasure was being eroded, while there was an emergence of 'a political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex'.⁴

Foucault relates how a whole range of new intellectual disciplines became organised, with self-appointed experts who might be able to speak both moralistically and rationally about sex. It was in the eighteenth century that governments came to see their 'subjects' or 'people' rather as a 'population', whose birth and death rates, marriages, and mental and physical health needed careful management and surveillance. While older church and civil codes legislated on the married couple and how it should procreate for the good of the community, now, by the mid-nineteenth century, civil servants, lawyers, criminologists and medical doctors sought to classify and taxonomise the 'sexual perverts' and 'deviants' who put at risk the health of society. The disciplines of biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology

and criminology became institutionalised within universities, which then fed into government policy. As Foucault put it,

all those minor perverts whom nineteenth-century psychiatrists entomologized by giving them strange baptismal names became scientific 'objects of knowledge': there were Krafft-Ebing's zoophiles and zooerasts, Rohleder's auto-monosexualists; and later mixoscopophiles, gynecomasts, presbyophiles, sexo-aesthetic inverts, and dyspareunist women.⁵

For many nineteenth-century experts, it seemed, everyone had to have a knowable sexuality, in order to be known. It was not simply the Church who named the subject, but medicine and law that gave the population their 'strange baptismal names'. So, then, zoophiles and zooerasts were people who enjoyed sex with animals; auto-monosexualists could only have sex with themselves (that is, masturbate); mixoscopophiles liked watching other people having sex; gynecomasts were men whose perverse pleasures were signalised by their overly developed breasts; presbyophiles had sex with old(er) people; sexo-aesthetic inverts were stimulated by dressing in the clothes of the opposite sex; and dyspareunist women found sexual intercourse painful. And this (as we shall soon see) was only a selection of the terms that were used to categorise the population.

But, most importantly, as Foucault had outlined (in the paragraph quoted above), one's sexuality 'was everywhere present in' the subject, 'at the root of all his actions' because it was the 'insidious and indefinitely active principle' that shaped his personality – who she or he was. Foucault highlighted the publication of a late nineteenth-century pornographic, possibly autobiographical, book called *My Secret Life*, which detailed in comprehensive and explicit detail the sex life of a Victorian gentleman.⁶ Whereas previous historians had argued that the very act of writing such a book demonstrated Victorian hypocrisy, Foucault saw this and other late-Victorian pornography as a product of the medico-legal obsession with the elaborate discourse of sex in the nineteenth century. And so Foucault's statement that, from

1870, 'the homosexual was now a species' should make more sense: under older 'civil and canonical codes', non-procreative forms of sex outside marriage were punishable as sins and infringements of legislation: the man who committed 'sodomy' (which covered various sorts of sexual acts in English law), was someone who had succumbed to a sin and had thereby committed a crime which demanded punishment, whereas the 'homosexual' was someone whose sexuality explained everything about his self.⁷

In the second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault went on to analyse the sexual norms and transgressions of ancient Greece and Rome. Turning away from a 'history of the desiring subject', Foucault focused on a history of the ancient discourses on sexual appetites, practices and norms.⁸ In this way, he sought to demonstrate how different ancient society was from the modern discourse of taxonomisation. Greeks, Foucault argued, did not categorise people according to the person with whom they had sex (homo-, hetero- or bisexual). Instead, an ancient Greek man was defined according to how well or how badly he could control his appetites: 'what differentiates men from one another [. . .] is not so much the type of objects towards which they are oriented, nor the mode of sexual practice they prefer; above all, it is the intensity of that practice'.⁹ Foucault examined a series of classical Greek texts which underlined how pleasure could be made useful for Greek society more broadly. Foucault's Romans, on the other hand, were interested in how sexual desires could be integrated into a more general regimen for the care of the self, in the face of an increasingly despotic imperial world which left many bereft of their social and political powers.¹⁰ While classical societies did often have strict norms and transgressions regarding sex, these did not revolve around classifying male subjects around a particular sexuality. One particular concern that ancient male writers continually evinced in Foucault's account was a concern with phallic penetration: sex was acceptable for a man (regardless of the sex of the partner) as long as he was the penetrating partner.¹¹

The second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité*, unsurprisingly, were widely read by classicists. Many were excited by his interpretations of texts, and applied his readings to other works he had not included. Other