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1

Forgetting Foucault

When Jean Baudrillard published his infamous pamphlet *Forget Foucault* in March 1977, "Foucault's intellectual power," as Baudrillard recalled ten years later, "was enormous." After all, the reviews of *La volonté de savoir*, the first volume of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (published the previous November), had only just started to appear. At that time, according to Baudrillard's belated attempt in *Cool Memories* to redeem his gaffe and to justify himself—by portraying his earlier attack on Foucault as having been inspired, improbably, by sentiments of friendship and generosity—Foucault was being "persecuted," allegedly, by "thousands of disciples and . . . sycophants." In such circumstances, Baudrillard virtuously insisted, "to forget him was to do him a service; to adulate him was to do him a disservice." Just how far Baudrillard was willing to go in order to render this sort of unsolicited service to Foucault emerges from another remark of his in the same passage: "Foucault's death. Loss of confidence in his own genius . . . Leaving the sexual aspects aside, the loss of the immune system is no more than the biological transcription of the other process."¹ Foucault was already washed up by the time he died, in other words, and AIDS was merely the outward and visible sign of his inward, moral and intellectual, decay. Leaving the sexual aspects aside, of course.

(Baudrillard freely voices elsewhere what he carefully suppresses here about "the sexual aspects" of AIDS: the pandemic, he suggests, might be considered "a form of viral catharsis" and "a remedy against total sexual liberation, which is sometimes more dangerous than an epidemic, because the latter always ends. Thus AIDS could be understood as a counterforce against the total elimination of structure and the total unfolding of sexuality."² Some such New Age moralism obviously provides the subtext of Baudrillard's vengeful remarks in *Cool Memories* on the death of Foucault.)

Baudrillard's injunction to forget Foucault, which was premature at the time it was issued, has since become superfluous. Not that Foucault is neglected; not that his work is ignored. (Quite the contrary, in fact.) Rather, Foucault's continuing prestige, and the almost ritualistic invocation of his name by academic practitioners of cultural theory, has had the effect of reducing the operative range of his thought to a small set of received ideas, slogans, and bits of jargon that have now become so commonplace and so familiar as to make a more direct engagement with Foucault's texts entirely dispensable. As a result, we are so far from remembering Foucault that there is little point in entertaining the possibility of forgetting him.

Take, for example, the title of a conference on "Bodies and Pleasures in Pre- and Early Modernity," held from 3 to 5 November 1995 at the University of California at Santa Cruz. "Bodies and pleasures," as that famous phrase occurs in the concluding paragraphs of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, volume 1, does not in fact describe "Foucault's zero-degree definition of the elements in question in the history of sexuality," as the poster for the conference confidently announces. To be sure, the penultimate sentence of *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, finds Foucault looking forward to the day, some time in the future, when "a different economy [*une autre économie*] of bodies and pleasures" will have replaced the apparatus of sexuality and when, accordingly, it will become difficult to understand "how the ruses of sexuality . . . were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex."³ An incautious reader might take that phrase, "a different economy of bodies and pleasures," to denote a mere rearrangement of otherwise unchanged and unchanging "bodies and pleasures," a minor modification in the formal design of the sexual "economy" alone, consisting in a revised organization of its perennial "elements" (as the conference poster terms them). And Foucault himself occasionally spoke as if bodies and pleasures constituted the raw material of sexuality.⁴ But such an interpretation of Foucault's meaning, reasserting the venerable opposition between material (corporeal) base and ideological (sexual) superstructure, though superficially plausible, is mistaken—and in fact it runs counter to

the entire thrust of his larger argument. The change of which Foucault speaks in the next-to-last sentence of *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, and which he seems fondly to anticipate, involves nothing less than the displacement of the current sexual economy by a different economy altogether, an economy that will feature “bodies and pleasures” instead of, or at least in addition to, such familiar and overworked entities as “sexuality” and “desire.”⁵

Foucault makes it very clear that bodies and pleasures, in his conception, are not the eternal building blocks of sexual subjectivity or sexual experience; they are not basic, irreducible, or natural “elements” that different human societies rearrange in different patterns over time—and that our own society has elaborated into the cultural edifice now known as “sexuality.” Rather, “bodies” and “pleasures” refer to two entities that have been taken up by the modern apparatus of sexuality, that form part of it and function specifically as its ground, but that modern sexual discourse and practice largely ignore, underplay, or pass quickly over, and that accordingly are relatively undercoded, relatively uninvested by the normalizing apparatus of sexuality, especially in comparison to more thoroughly policed and more easily pathologized items such as “sexual desire.” (Or so at least it seemed to Foucault at the time he was writing, in the wake of the sexual liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which had exhorted us to liberate our “sexuality” and to unrepress or desubliminate our “desire.”) For that reason, bodies and pleasures represented to Foucault an opportunity for effecting, as he says earlier in the same passage, “a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality,” a means of resistance to the apparatus of sexuality.⁶ In particular, the strategy that Foucault favors consists in asserting, “against the [various] holds of power, the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance.”⁷ The very possibility of pursuing such a body- and pleasure-centered strategy of resistance to the apparatus of sexuality disappears, of course, as soon as bodies and pleasures cease to be understood merely as handy weapons against current technologies of normalization and attain instead to the status of transhistorical components of some natural phenomenon or material substrate underlying “the history of sexuality” itself. Such a notion of “bodies and pleasures,” so very familiar and uncontroversial and positivistic has it now become, is indeed nothing if not eminently forgettable.

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In what follows I propose to explore another aspect of the oblivion that has engulfed Foucault’s approach to sexuality since his death, one par-

ticular “forgetting” that has had important consequences for the practice of both the history of sexuality and lesbian/gay studies. I refer to the reception and deployment of Foucault’s distinction between the sodomite and the homosexual—a distinction often taken to be synonymous with the distinction between sexual acts and sexual identities.⁸ The passage in *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, in which Foucault makes this far-fetched distinction is so well known that it might seem unnecessary to quote it, but what that really means, I am contending, is that the passage is in fact so well forgotten that nothing but direct quotation from it will do. Foucault writes,

As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their author was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage—a past, a case history and a childhood, a character, a form of life; also a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing in his total being escapes his sexuality. Everywhere in him it is present: underlying all his actions, because it is their insidious and indefinitely active principle, shamelessly inscribed on his face and on his body, because it is a secret that always gives itself away. It is consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. . . . 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 was a renegade [or “backslider”]; the homosexual is now a species.

[La sodomie—celle des anciens droits civils ou canoniques—était un type d’actes interdits; leur auteur n’en était que le sujet juridique. L’homosexuel du XIX^e siècle est devenu un personnage: un passé, une histoire et une enfance, un caractère, une forme de vie; une morphologie aussi, avec une anatomie indiscrète et peut-être une physiologie mystérieuse. Rien de ce qu’il est au total n’échappe à sa sexualité. Partout en lui, elle est présente: sous-jacente à toutes ses conduites parce qu’elle en est le principe insidieux et indéfiniment actif; inscrite sans pudeur sur son visage et sur son corps parce qu’elle est un secret qui se trahit toujours. Elle lui est consubstantielle, moins comme un péché d’habitude que comme une nature singulière. . . . L’homosexualité est apparue comme une des figures de la sexualité lorsqu’elle a été rattachée à la pratique de la sodomie sur une sorte d’androgynie

interieure, un hermaphrodisme de l'âme. Le sodomite était un relaps, l'homosexuel est maintenant une espèce.]⁹

Foucault's formulation is routinely taken to authorize the doctrine that before the nineteenth century the categories or classifications typically employed by European cultures to articulate sexual difference did not distinguish among different kinds of sexual actors but only among different kinds of sexual acts. In the pre-modern and early modern periods, so the claim goes, sexual behavior did not represent a sign or marker of a person's sexual identity; it did not indicate or express some more generalized or holistic feature of the person, such as that person's subjectivity, disposition, or character. The pattern is clearest, we are told, in the case of deviant sexual acts. Sodomy, for example, was a sinful act that anyone of sufficient depravity might commit; it was not a symptom of a type of personality. To perform the act of sodomy was not to manifest a deviant sexual identity but merely to be the author of a morally objectionable act.¹⁰ Whence the conclusion that before the modern era sexual deviance could be predicated only of acts, not of persons or identities.

There is a good deal of truth in this received view, and Foucault himself may even have subscribed to a version of it at the time he wrote *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1.¹¹ Although I am about to argue strenuously against it, I do not want to return us to some unreconstructed or reactionary belief in the universal validity and applicability of modern sexual concepts or to promote an uncritical acceptance of the categories and classifications of sexuality as true descriptors of the basic realities of human erotic life—and, therefore, as unproblematic instruments for the historical analysis of human culture in all times and places. It is certainly not my intention to undermine the principles and practices of the new social history, let alone to recant my previous arguments for the historical and cultural constitution of sexual identity (which have sometimes been misinterpreted as providing support for the view I shall be criticizing here).¹² Least of all do I wish to revive an essentialist faith in the unqualified existence of homosexual and heterosexual persons in Western societies before the modern era. I take it as established that a large-scale transformation of social and personal life took place in Europe as part of the massive cultural reorganization that accompanied the transition from a traditional, hierarchical, status-based society to a modern, individualistic, mass society during the period of industrialization and the rise of a capitalist economy. One symptom of that transformation, as a number of researchers (both before and after Foucault) have pointed out, is that something new happens to the various

relations among sexual roles, sexual object-choices, sexual categories, sexual behaviors, and sexual identities in bourgeois Europe between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.¹³ Sex takes on new social and individual functions, and it assumes a new importance in defining and normalizing the modern self. The conception of the sexual instinct as an autonomous human function without an organ appears for the first time in the nineteenth century, and without it the currently prevailing, heavily psychologized model of sexual subjectivity—which knits up desire, its objects, sexual behavior, gender identity, reproductive function, mental health, erotic sensibility, personal style, and degrees of normality or deviance into an individuating, normalizing feature of the personality called “sexuality” or “sexual orientation”—is inconceivable.¹⁴ Sexuality is indeed, as Foucault claimed, a distinctively modern production. Nonetheless, the canonical reading of the famous passage in *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, and the conclusion conventionally based on it—namely, that before the modern era sexual deviance could be predicated only of acts, not of persons or identities—is, I shall contend, as inattentive to Foucault's text as it is heedless of European history.¹⁵

Such a misreading of Foucault can be constructed only by setting aside, and then forgetting, the decisive qualifying phrase with which his famous pronouncement opens: “*As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes*.” Foucault begins, “sodomy was a category of forbidden acts.”¹⁶ Foucault, in other words, is making a carefully limited point about the differing styles of disqualification applied to male love by pre-modern legal definitions of sodomy and by nineteenth-century psychiatric conceptualizations of homosexuality, respectively. The intended effect of his rhetorical extravagance in this passage is to highlight what in particular was new and distinctive about the modern discursive practices that produced the category of “the homosexual.” As almost always in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault is speaking about discursive and institutional practices, not about what people really did in bed or what they thought about it. He is not attempting to describe popular attitudes or private emotions, much less is he presuming to convey what actually went on in the minds of different historical subjects when they had sex. He is making a contrast between the way something called “sodomy” was typically defined by the laws of various European states and municipalities as well as by Christian penitentials and canon law, on the one hand, and the way something called “homosexuality” was typically defined by the writings of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century sexologists, on the other.

A glance at the larger context of the much-excerpted passage in *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, is sufficient to make Foucault's meaning

clear. Foucault introduces his account of “the nineteenth-century homosexual” in order to illustrate a more general claim, which he advances in the sentence immediately preceding: the “new persecution of the peripheral sexualities” that occurred in the modern era was accomplished in part through “an *incorporation of perversions* and a new *specification of individuals*.”¹⁷ (Earlier efforts to regulate sexual behavior did not feature such tactics, according to Foucault.) The whole discussion of this distinctively modern method of sexual control is embedded, in turn, within a larger argument about a crucial shift in the nature of sexual prohibitions as those prohibitions were constructed in formal discursive practices, a shift that occurred in Europe between the pre-modern period and the nineteenth century. Comparing medieval moral and legal codifications of sexual relations with nineteenth-century medical and forensic ones, Foucault contrasts various pre-modern styles of sexual prohibition, which took the form of specifying rules of conduct, making prescriptions and recommendations, and discriminating between the licit and the illicit, with modern styles of sexual prohibition. These latter-day strategies took the form of establishing norms of self-regulation—not by legislating standards of behavior and punishing deviations from them but rather by constructing new species of individuals, discovering and “implanting” perversions, and, in this way, elaborating more subtle and insidious means of social control. The ultimate purpose of the comparison is to support Foucault’s “historico-theoretical” demonstration that power is not only negative but also positive, not only repressive but also productive.

Foucault is analyzing the different modalities of power at work in pre-modern and modern codifications of sexual prohibition, which is to say in two historical instances of sexual discourse attached to institutional practices. He carefully isolates the formal discursive systems that he will proceed to discuss from popular moral attitudes and behaviors about which he will have nothing to say and that he dismisses from consideration with barely a parenthetical glance: “Up to the end of the eighteenth century, three major explicit codes [*codes*]—*apart from regularities of custom and constraints of opinion*—governed sexual practices: canon law [*droit canonique*], Christian pastoral, and civil law.”¹⁸ Foucault goes on to expand this observation in a passage that directly anticipates and lays the groundwork for the famous portrait he will later sketch of the differences between “the sodomy of the old civil and canonical codes” and that novel invention of modern psychiatry, “the nineteenth-century homosexual.” Describing the terms in which pre-modern sexual prohibitions defined the scope of their operation and the nature of their target, he writes, “What was taken into account in the civil and religious jurisdictions alike was a

general unlawfulness. Doubtless acts ‘contrary to nature’ were stamped as especially abominable, but they were perceived simply as an extreme form of acts ‘against the law’; they, too, were infringements of decrees—decrees which were just as sacred as those of marriage and which had been established in order to rule the order of things and the plan of beings. Prohibitions bearing on sex were basically of a juridical nature [*de nature juridique*].”¹⁹ This passage prepares the reader to gauge the differences between these “juridical” prohibitions against “acts” “‘contrary to nature’” and the nineteenth-century prohibitions against homosexuality, which did not simply criminalize sexual relations between men as illegal but medically disqualified them as pathological and—not content with pathologizing the act—constructed the perpetrator as a deviant form of life, a perverse personality, an anomalous species, thereby producing a new specification of individuals whose true nature would be defined from now on by reference to their abnormal “sexuality.” The nineteenth-century disciplining of the subject, though it purported to aim at the eradication of “peripheral sexualities,” paradoxically required their consolidation and “implantation” or “incorporation” in individuals, for only by that means could the subject’s body itself become so deeply, so minutely invaded and colonized by the agencies of normalization. The discursive construction of the new sexual perversions was therefore a ruse of power, no longer simply prohibiting behavior but now also controlling, regulating, and normalizing embodied subjects. As Foucault sums up his argument, “The implantation of perversions is an instrument-effect: it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body and penetrated modes of conduct.”²⁰ Want an example? Take the case of homosexuality: “The sodomy of the old civil and canonical codes was a category of forbidden acts; their author was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage. . . .” So that’s how the overall argument works.

Foucault narrowly frames his comparison between sodomy and homosexuality with the purpose of this larger argument in mind. The point-by-point contrast—between legal discourse (*codes* and *droits*) and psychiatric discourse, between juridical subjects and sexual subjects, between laws and norms, between acts contrary to nature and embodied subjects or species of individuals—is ruthlessly schematic. That schematic reduction is in keeping with the general design of the first volume of Foucault’s *History*, which merely outlines, in an admittedly preliminary and tentative fashion, the principles intended to guide the remaining five unfinished studies that Foucault projected for his *History* at the time. His schematic opposition

between sodomy and homosexuality is first and foremost a discursive analysis, not a social history, let alone an exhaustive one. *It is not an empirical claim about the historical existence or non-existence of sexually deviant individuals.* It is a claim about the internal logic and systematic functioning of two different discursive styles of sexual disqualification—and, ultimately, it is a heuristic device for foregrounding what is distinctive about modern techniques of social and sexual regulation. As such, it points to a historical development that will need to be properly explored in its own right (as Foucault intended to do in a separate volume), and it dramatizes the larger themes of Foucault's *History*: the historical triumph of normalization over law, the decentralization and dispersion of the mechanisms of regulation, the disciplining of the modern subject, the traversal of sexuality by relations of power, the productivity of power, and the displacement of state coercion by the technical and bureaucratic administration of life ("biopower"). By documenting the existence of both a discursive and a temporal gap between two dissimilar styles of defining, and disqualifying, male same-sex sexual expression, Foucault highlights the historical and political specificity of "sexuality," both as a cultural concept and as a tactical device, and so he contributes to the task of "introducing" the history of sexuality as a possible field of study—and as a radical scholarly and political project. Nothing, Foucault says about the differences between those two historically distant, and operationally distinct, discursive strategies for regulating and delegitimizing forms of male same-sex sexual contacts prohibits us from inquiring into the connections that pre-modern people may have made between specific sexual acts and the particular ethos, or sexual style, or sexual subjectivity, of those who performed them.

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A more explicit argument to this effect was advanced in the late 1980s by John J. Winkler, in opposition less to Foucault than to what even then were already well-established, conventional, and highly dogmatic misreadings of Foucault. Winkler, a classical scholar, was discussing the ancient Greek and Roman figure of the *kinaidos* or *cinaedus*, a "scare-image" (or phobic construction) of a sexually deviant and gender-deviant male, whose most salient distinguishing feature was a supposedly "feminine" love of being sexually penetrated by other men.²¹ "Scholars of recent sex-gender history," Winkler wrote in his 1990 book, *The Constraints of Desire*, "have asserted that pre-modern systems classified not persons but acts and that 'the' homosexual as a person-category is a recent invention."²² He went on to qualify that assertion as follows: "The *kinaidos*, to be sure, is not a

'homosexual' but neither is he just an ordinary guy who now and then decided to commit a kinaidic act. The conception of a *kinaidos* was of a man socially deviant in his entire being; principally observable in behavior that flagrantly violated or contravened the dominant social definition of masculinity. To this extent, *kinaidos* was a category of person, not just of acts."²² Ancient Mediterranean societies, of course, did not exactly have "categories of person," types of blank individuals, in the modern sense, as Winkler himself pointed out. The ancient conception of the *kinaidos*, Winkler explained, depended on indigenous notions of gender. It arose in the context of a belief system in which, first of all, the two genders are conceived as opposite ends of a much-traveled continuum and, second, masculinity is thought to be a difficult accomplishment—one that is achieved only by a constant struggle akin to warfare against enemies both internal and external—and thus requires great fortitude in order to maintain. In a situation where it is so hard, both personally and culturally, to be a man, Winkler observed, "the temptation to desert one's side is very great." The *kinaidos* succumbed to that temptation.

The *kinaidos* could be conceived by the ancients in both universalizing and minoritizing terms—as a potential threat to the masculine identity of every male, that is, and as the disfiguring peculiarity of a small class of deviant individuals.²³ Because ancient Mediterranean discourses of sex and gender featured the notion that "the two sexes are not simply opposite but stand at poles of a continuum which can be traversed," as Winkler pointed out, "woman" is not only the opposite of a man; she is also a potentially threatening 'internal emigré' of masculine identity."²⁴ The prospect of losing one's masculine gender status and being reduced to the social ranks of women therefore represented a universal possibility for all men. In such a context, the figure of the *kinaidos* stood as a warning to men of what could happen to them if they gave up the internal struggle to master their desires and surrendered, in womanly fashion, to the lure of pleasure. The clear implication of this warning is that the only thing that prevents men from allowing other men to use them as objects of sexual degradation, the only thing that enables men to resist the temptation to let other men fuck them like whores, is not the nature of their own desires, or their own capacities for sexual enjoyment, but their hard-won masculine ability to withstand the seductive appeal of pleasure-at-any-price. The *kinaidos*, on this view, is not someone who has a different sexual orientation from other men or who belongs to some autonomous sexual species. Rather, he is someone who represents what *every* man would be like if he were so shameless as to sacrifice his dignity and masculine gender status for the sake of gratifying the most odious and disgraceful, though

no doubt voluptuous, bodily appetites. Such a worthless character is so radical and so complete a failure as a man that he could be understood, at least by the ancients, as wholly reversing the internal gender hierarchy that structured and defined normative masculinity for men and that maintained it against manifold temptations to effeminacy. The catastrophic failure of male self-fashioning that the *kinaidos* represented was so complete, in other words, that it could not be imagined as merely confined within the sphere of erotic life or restricted to the occasional performance of disreputable sexual acts: it defined and determined a man's social identity in its totality, and it generated a recognizable social type—namely, the “scare-image” and phobic stereotype of the *kinaidos*, which Winkler so eloquently described.

As the mere existence of the stereotype implies, the ancients were quite capable of conceptualizing the figure of the *kinaidos*, when they so desired, not only in anxiously universalizing terms but also in comfortably minoritizing ones. Although some normal men might acknowledge that the scandalous pleasures to which the *kinaidos* succumbed, and which normal men properly avoided, were universally pleasurable in and of themselves,²⁵ still the very fact that the *kinaidos* did succumb to such pleasures, whereas normal men did not, contributed to defining his difference and marked out the vast distance that separated the *kinaidos* from normal men. Just as some moderns may think that, whereas anyone *can* get addicted to drugs, only people who have something fundamentally wrong with them actually *do*, so some ancients evidently thought that, although the pleasures of sexual penetration in themselves might be universally pleasurable, any male who actually pursued them suffered from a specific constitutional defect—namely, a constitutional lack of the masculine capacity to withstand the appeal of pleasure (especially pleasure deemed exceptionally disgraceful or degrading) as well as a constitutional tendency to adopt a specifically feminine attitude of surrender in relations with other men. Hence, the desire to be sexually penetrated by other men, which was the most dramatic and flagrant sign of the *kinaidos*'s constitutional femininity, could be interpreted by the ancients in sharply minoritizing terms as an indication of a physiological anomaly in the *kinaidos* or as the symptom of a moral or mental “disease.”²⁶ Conceived in these terms, the *kinaidos* did not represent the frightening possibility of a failure of nerve on the part of every man, a collapse in the face of the ongoing struggle that all men necessarily waged to maintain and defend their masculinity; he was simply a peculiar, repugnant, and perplexing freak, driven to abandon his sexual and gender identity in pursuit of a pleasure that no one but a woman could possibly enjoy. (And there were even some abominable practices, like fellatio,

which a *kinaidos* might relish but no decent woman would so much as contemplate.)

The details in this minoritizing conception of the *kinaidos* have been filled in with great skill and documented at fascinating length by Maud Gleason, most recently in her 1995 book, *Making Men*. “The essential idea here,” writes Gleason, corroborating Winkler’s emphasis on the gender deviance of the *kinaidos* and calling attention to what she fittingly terms the ancient “semiotics of gender” that produced the *kinaidos* as a visibly deviant kind of being, “is that there exist [according to the axioms of Greek and Roman social life] masculine and feminine ‘types’ that do not necessarily correspond to the anatomical sex of the person in question.”²⁷ Gleason approaches the figure of the *kinaidos* from an unexpected and original scholarly angle—namely, from a close study of the neglected scientific writings of the ancient physiognomists, experts in the learned technique of deciphering a person’s character from his or her appearance. Gleason’s analysis of the ancient corpus of physiognomic texts makes clear that the portrait they construct of the figure of the *kinaidos* agrees with the stereotypical features commonly ascribed by the ancients to the general appearance of gender-deviant or “effeminate” men. Like such men, the *kinaidos* could be identified, or so the Greeks thought, by a variety of physical features: weak eyes, knees that knock together, head tilted to the right, hands limply upturned, and hips that either swing from side to side or are held tightly rigid. Latin physiognomy agrees largely with the Greek tradition in its enumeration of the characteristics of the *cinaedus*: “A tilted head, a mincing gait, an enervated voice, a lack of stability in the shoulders, and a feminine way of moving the body.” Gleason adds that a *kinaidos* could also be known by certain specific mannerisms: “He shifts his eyes around in sheep-like fashion when he speaks; he touches his fingers to his nose; he compulsively obliterates all traces of spittle he may find—his own or anyone else’s—by rubbing it into the dust with his heel; he frequently stops to admire what he considers his own best feature; he smiles furtively while talking; he holds his arms turned outward; he laughs out loud; and he has an annoying habit of clasping other people by the hand.”²⁸ The *kinaidos*, in short, is considerably more than the juridical subject of deviant sexual acts. To recur to Foucault’s terminology, the *kinaidos* represents at the very least a full-blown morphology. As Gleason observes, “Foucault’s description of the nineteenth-century homosexual fits the *cinaedus* remarkably well. . . . The *cinaedus* was a ‘life-form’ all to himself, and his condition was written all over him in signs that could be decoded by those practiced in the art.” Gleason hastens to add, however, that “what made [the *cinaedus*] different from normal folk . . . was not

simply the fact that his sexual partners included people of the same sex as himself (that, after all, was nothing out of the ordinary), nor was it some kind of psychosexual orientation—a ‘sexuality’ in the nineteenth-century sense—but rather an inversion or reversal of his gender identity: his abandonment of a ‘masculine’ role in favor of a ‘feminine’ one.”²⁹

Gleason’s conclusion has now been massively confirmed by Craig Williams, a specialist in ancient Roman literature, who has undertaken an exhaustive survey of the extant Latin sources. Williams’s careful discussion makes it clear that the *cinaedus* does not correspond closely to any type of individual defined by more recent, canonical categories of “sexuality”: “When a Roman called a man a *cinaedus*,” Williams explains, “he was not ruling out the possibility that the man might play sexual roles other than that of the receptive partner in anal intercourse.” Hence,

the *cinaedus* was not the same thing as a “passive homosexual,” since it was neither his expression of sexual desire for other males nor his proclivity for playing the receptive role in anal intercourse that gave him his identity or uniquely defined him as a *cinaedus*: he might engage in sexual practices with women and still be a *cinaedus*, and a man did not automatically become a *cinaedus* simply by being penetrated (victims of rape, for example, would not normally be described as such). A *cinaedus* was, rather, a man who failed to be fully masculine, whose effeminacy showed itself in such symptoms as feminine clothing and mannerisms and a lascivious and oversexed demeanor that was likely to be embodied in a proclivity for playing the receptive role in anal intercourse. *Cinaedi* were, in other words, a prominent subset of the class of effeminate men (*mollēs*) . . . but hardly identical to that whole class.³⁰

Williams goes on to align his own analysis of the *cinaedus* with the tradition of interpretation that extends from Winkler and Gleason to the argument proposed here:

Likewise I am suggesting that the Roman *cinaedus* was in fact a category of person who was considered “socially deviant,” but that his social identity was crucially different from that of the “homosexual,” since his desire for persons of his own sex was not a defining or even problematic feature of his makeup as a deviant: his desire to be penetrated was indeed one of his characteristics, but, as we have seen, men called *cinaedi* were also thought capable of being interested in penetrative sexual relations with women.

Thus the deviance of the *cinaedus* is ultimately a matter of gender identity rather than sexual identity, in the sense that his predilection for playing the receptive role in penetrative acts was not the single defining feature of his identity but rather a sign of a more fundamental transgression of gender categories.³¹

There may well be modern categories of deviance—and there may well be contemporary forms of sexual rebellion, transgression, or affirmation—that correspond in some ways to the ancient figure of the *cinaedus* or *kinaidos*. But such categories would only partly overlap with the category of “the homosexual.” And if “homosexuality” today is sometimes understood to *apply* to figures such as the *cinaedus*, that tells us less about the particular characteristics of those figures than it does about the elasticity of the category of homosexuality itself. To capture the defining features of the *kinaidos*, it is necessary to begin, at least, by situating him in his own conceptual and social universe, as I have tried to do here.

One significant difference between the *kinaidos* and “the homosexual” is that the *kinaidos* was defined more in terms of gender than in terms of desire.³² For whether he was imagined in universalizing or minoritizing terms, the *kinaidos* in any case offended principally against the order of masculinity, not against the order of heterosexuality. As such, the *kinaidos* does not represent a salient example of deviant sexual subjectivity. Although he was distinguished from normal men in part by the pleasure he took in being sexually penetrated, his peculiar taste was not sufficient, in and of itself, to individuate him as a sexual subject. Rather, it was a generic sign of femininity. Even the *kinaidos*’s desire to play a receptive role in sexual intercourse with other men—which was about as close to manifesting a distinctive sexual orientation as the *kinaidos* ever got—represented to the ancients “merely a symptom of the deeper disorder, his gender deviance,” as Williams emphasizes, and so it did not imply a different kind of specifically sexual subjectivity.³² Inasmuch as the ancients did not distinguish systematically between gender and sexuality, the *kinaidos*’s desire to be sexually penetrated could be seen as part and parcel of his singular, transgendered condition: it represented at once a symptom and a consequence of the categorical reversal of his masculine gender identity, and it identified the *kinaidos* as womanly in both his gender identity and his sexual desire. To be “womanly,” in such a context, is of course a sexual as well as a gendered trait, and “gender deviance” should not be conceptualized as hermetically sealed off from matters of desire. Nonetheless, the *kinaidos*’s desire did not distinguish him as the bearer of a unique or distinct sexuality as such. Neither did his lust for bodily

pleasure, since—far from being considered a deviant desire, as we have seen—such lust was thought common to all men. Nor was there anything peculiar about the *kinaidos's* sexual object-choice: as Gleason mentions, it was quite possible in the ancient Mediterranean world for a male to desire and to pursue sexual contact with other males without impugning in the slightest his own masculinity or normative identity as a man—just so long as he played an insertive sexual role, observed all the proper phallogentric protocols in his relations with the objects of his desire, and maintained a normatively masculine style of personal deportment. Unlike the modern homosexual, then, the *kinaidos* was not defined principally by his “sexuality.” Even without a sexuality of his own, however, 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. To put it very schematically, the *kinaidos* represents an instance of deviant sexual morphology without deviant sexual subjectivity.³³

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Let's move on, then, from matters of sexual morphology and gender presentation and take up matters of sexual subjectivity itself. My chief exhibit in this latter department will be an ancient erotic fable told by Apuleius in the second century and retold by Giovanni Boccaccio in the fourteenth. The two texts have been the subject of a trenchant comparative study by Jonathan Walters in a 1993 issue of *Gender and History*. I have taken Walters's analysis as the basis of my own, and my interpretation closely follows his, although I have a somewhat different set of questions to put to the two texts.³⁴

Here, first of all, in bare outline, is the plot of the erotic fable under scrutiny. A man dining out at the home of a friend finds his dinner interrupted when his host detects an adulterous lover concealed in the house by the host's wife, who had not expected her husband to arrive home for dinner, much less with a guest in tow. His meal abruptly terminated, the disappointed guest returns to his own house for dinner ahead of schedule and tells the story to his righteously indignant wife, only to discover that she herself has hidden in his house a young lover of her own. Instead of threatening to kill the youth, however, the husband fucks him and lets him go. The end. This bare summary does little justice to the artistry and wit with which the two stories are told by their respective authors, but the point I wish to make is a historical one, not a literary one. I trust it will emerge from the following comparison.

Apuleius's tale of the baker's wife in book 9 of *The Golden Ass* begins with a description of her lover. He is a boy (*puer*), Apuleius's narrator tells us, still notable for the shiny smoothness of his beardless cheeks, and still delighting and attracting the sexual attention of wayward husbands (*adulteros*) (9.22). According to the ergic postulates of ancient Mediterranean societies, then, there will be nothing out of the ordinary about a normal man finding him sexually desirable. So the first thing to notice is that Apuleius explains the sexual motivation of the wronged husband by reference to erotic qualities inherent in the sexual object, not by reference to any distinguishing characteristics of the sexual subject—not, in other words, by reference to the husband's own sexual tastes, to his erotic subjectivity. This emphasis on the attractiveness of the boy thereby prepares the way for the ending of the story; it is not necessary for the narrator to invoke any specific sort of erotic inclination, much less a deviant one, on the part of the husband in order to anticipate the denouement of the plot. In fact, as Walters observes, the husband “is not described in any way that marks him out as unusual, let alone reprehensible: he is portrayed as blameless, ‘a good man in general and extremely temperate’; that is in keeping with a story designed, within the larger context of Apuleius's narrative, to illustrate the mischief caused to their husbands by devious, depraved, and adulterous wives.”³⁵ When the baker discovers the boy, he locks up his wife and takes the boy to bed himself, thereby (as Apuleius's narrator puts it) enjoying “the most gratifying revenge for his ruined marriage.” At daybreak he summons two of his slaves and has them hold the boy up while he flogs his buttocks with a rod, leaving the boy “with his white buttocks the worse for their treatment” both by night and by day. The baker then kicks his wife out of the house and prepares to divorce her (9.28).

Boccaccio's tale of Pietro di Vinciolo of Perugia, the Tenth Story of the Fifth Day of the *Decameron*, is based directly on Apuleius; its departures from its model are therefore especially telling.³⁶ Boccaccio's narrator begins further back in time, at the point when Pietro takes a wife “more to beguile others and to abate the general suspect [*la generale oppinione*] in which he was held by all the Perugians, than for any desire [*vaghezza*] of his own” (trans. Payne-Singleton). As Walters remarks, “Boccaccio . . . is at pains to tell us from the beginning that something is wrong with the husband.”³⁷ What Boccaccio marks specifically as deviant about Pietro, or so the foregoing quotation from the *Decameron* implies, is his desire.³⁸ This turns out to refer to his sexual object-choice and to comprehend, in particular, two different aspects of it: first, the customary objects of his sexual desire are young men, not the usual objects of desire for a man,

and, second, Pietro (unlike the baker in Apuleius) has no desire for the usual objects of male desire—namely, women. So he has a non-standard erotic subjectivity, insofar as he both desires the wrong objects and fails to desire the right objects.

Both of these erotic errors are dramatized by the narrative. We are told that his wife's lover is "a youth [garzone], who was one of the goodliest and most agreeable of all Perugia," and that when Pietro discovers him he instantly recognizes him as "one whom he had long pursued for his own lewd ends." Understandably, Pietro "no less rejoiced to have found him than his wife was woful"; when he confronts her with the lad, "she saw that he was all agog with joy because he held so goodly a stripling [giovinetto] by the hand." No wonder that, far from punishing his wife, Pietro hastens to strike an obscene bargain with her to share the young man between them. As for Pietro's sexual indifference to women, we are told that his lusty, red-haired, highly sexed young wife, "who would liefer have had two husbands than one," is frustrated by her husband's inattention and realizes that she will exhaust herself arguing with him before she will change his disposition. Indeed, he has "a mind far more disposed otherwhar than to her [molto più ad altro che a lei l'animo avea disposto]." At the culmination of the story, Pietro's wife reproaches him for being as desirous of women as "a dog of cudgels [così vago di noi come il can delle mazzel]." 39

Note that Boccaccio's narrator says nothing to indicate that Pietro is effeminate or in any way deviant in terms of his personal style or sexual morphology.⁴⁰ *You wouldn't know he was a paederast or a sodomite by looking at him.* Nothing about his looks or his behavior gives him away—or gives his wife any advance warning about the nature of his sexual peculiarities. As she says, she had supposed he desired what men typically do desire and should desire when she married him; otherwise, she would never have done so. "He knew I was a woman," she exclaims to herself; "why, then, did he take me to wife, if women were not to his mind [certo all'animo]?" Nothing in his morphology made her suspect he harbored deviant desires. And why in any case should we presume that the husband would exhibit signs of effeminacy? He no more resembles the ancient figure of the *kinaidos* than does his literary forebear in Apuleius. Far from displaying a supposedly "feminine" inclination to submit himself to other men to be sexually penetrated by them, the husband in Boccaccio plays a sexually insertive role in intercourse with his wife's lover. That, after all, is the point of the story's punchline: "On the following morning the youth was escorted back to the public square not altogether certain which he had the more been that night, wife or husband"—meaning, obviously, *wife to*

*Pietro or husband to Pietro's wife.*⁴¹ What is at issue in Boccaccio's portrait of Pietro di Vinciolo, then, is not gender deviance but sexual deviance.

Finally, in Apuleius's tale the husband's enjoyment of his wife's lover is an incidental component of his revenge and does not express any special or distinctive sexual taste on his part, much less a habitual preference, whereas in Boccaccio's tale the husband is identified as the subject of deviant sexual desires and is only too happy to exploit his wife's infidelity for the purposes of his own pleasure.⁴²

A comparison of these two pre-modern texts indicates that it is possible for sexual acts to be represented in such texts as either *more or less* related to sexual dispositions, desires, and subjectivities. Whereas Apuleius's text makes no incriminating association between the baker's sexual enjoyment of the adulterous youth and the baker's character, masculinity, or sexual disposition, Boccaccio's text connects the performance of sodomitical acts with a deviant sexual taste and a deviant sexual subjectivity. In order to update Apuleius's plot it seems to have been necessary for Boccaccio to posit a sodomitical disposition or inclination on the husband's part: he seems to have had no other way of motivating the scandalously witty conclusion of the tale as he had inherited it from Apuleius. Pietro's inclination is not the same thing as a sexual orientation, much less a sexual identity or form of life, to be sure. For one thing, his sexual preference seems contained, compartmentalized, and does not appear to connect to any other feature of his character, such as a sensibility, a set of personal mannerisms, a style of gender presentation, or a psychology.⁴³ Nonetheless, Pietro's sexual taste for young men represents a notable and perhaps even a defining feature of his life as a sexual subject, as well as a distinctive feature of his life as a social and ethical subject. Pietro may not be a deviant life-form, like the ancient Greek or Roman *kinaidos*—a traitor to his gender whose deviance is visibly inscribed in his personal demeanor—but neither is he nothing more than the juridical subject of a sodomitical act. Rather, his sexual preference for youths is a settled feature of his character and a significant fact about his social identity as a moral and sexual agent.⁴⁴

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To sum up, I have tried to suggest that the current doctrine that holds that sexual acts were unconnected to sexual identities in European discourses before the nineteenth century is mistaken in at least two different respects. First, sexual acts could be interpreted as representative components of an individual's sexual morphology. Second, sexual acts could be interpreted as representative expressions of an individual's sexual subject-

tivity. A sexual morphology is not the same thing as a sexual subjectivity: the figure of the *kinaidos*, for example, represents an instance of deviant morphology without subjectivity, whereas Boccaccio's Pietro represents an instance of deviant subjectivity without morphology. Thus, morphology and subjectivity, as I have been using those terms, describe two *different* logics according to which sexual acts can be connected to some more generalized feature of an individual's identity. In particular, I've argued that the ancient figure of the *kinaidos* qualifies as an instance of a sexual life-form or morphology and, therefore, that the property of *kinaidia* (or being a *kinaidos*) is a property of social beings, not merely of sexual acts. Nonetheless, what defines the *kinaidos* is not a unique or peculiar subjectivity but a shameless appetite for pleasure, which is common to all human beings, along with a deviant gender-style, which assimilates him to the cultural definition of woman. By contrast, the sodomitical character of Boccaccio's Pietro di Vinciolo does not express itself through a deviant morphology but through his sexual tastes, preferences, inclinations, or desires—that is, through a deviant subjectivity. Sodomy, in Boccaccio's world, like *kinaidia* in classical antiquity, is a property of social beings, not merely of sexual acts. The relation between the sodomitical act and the subject who performs it is constructed differently in the case of the sodomite from the way that acts and social identities are connected in the case of the *kinaidos*.

Neither the sexual morphology of the *kinaidos* nor the sexual subjectivity of the fourteenth-century Italian sodomite should be understood as a sexual identity, or a sexual orientation in the modern sense—much less as equivalent to the modern formation known as homosexuality. At the very least, popular notions of homosexual identity and homosexual orientation today tend to insist on the *conjunction* of sexual morphology and sexual subjectivity: they presume a convergence in the sexual actor of a deviant personal style with a deviant erotic desire.⁴⁵ In addition, what historically distinguishes “homosexuality” as a sexual classification is its unprecedented combination of at least three distinct and previously uncorrelated conceptual entities: (1) a psychiatric notion of a perverted or pathological *orientation*, derived from nineteenth-century medicine, which is an essentially psychological concept that applies to the inner life of the individual and does not necessarily entail same-sex sexual behavior or desire; (2) a psychoanalytic notion of same-sex *sexual object-choice* or desire, derived from Sigmund Freud and his coworkers, which is a category of erotic intentionality and does not necessarily imply a permanent psychosexual orientation, let alone a pathological or deviant one (since, according to Freud, most normal individuals make an unconscious homo-

sexual object-choice at least at some point in their fantasy lives); and (3) a sociological notion of *sexually deviant behavior*, derived from nineteenth- and twentieth-century forensic inquiries into “social problems,” which focuses on non-standard sexual practice and does not necessarily refer to erotic psychology or psychosexual orientation (since same-sex sexual behavior is widely distributed in the population, as Kinsey showed, and is not the exclusive property of those with a unique psychology or a homosexual sexual orientation).⁴⁶ Despite their several failures to meet the requirements of the modern definition of the homosexual, however, both the *kinaidos* and Boccaccio's Pietro, in their quite different and distinctive ways, challenge the orthodox pseudo-Foucauldian doctrine about the supposedly strict separation between sexual acts and sexual identities in European culture before the nineteenth century.

My argument, then, does not refute Foucault's claim about the different ways male same-sex eroticism was constructed by the discourse of “the ancient civil or canonical codes” and by the discourse of nineteenth-century sexuality. Nor does it demolish the absolutely indispensable distinction between sexual acts and sexual identities that historians of homosexuality have extracted from Foucault's text (where the term “identity” nowhere occurs) and that, in any case, antedated it by many years.⁴⁷ Least of all does my argument undermine a rigorously historicizing approach to the study of the social and cultural constitution of sexual subjectivity and sexual identity. (Whatever I may be up to in this essay, a posthumous rapprochement with John Boswell is not it.) What my argument does do, I hope, is to encourage us to inquire into the construction of sexual identities before the emergence of sexual orientations and to do this *without* recurring necessarily to modern notions of “sexuality” or sexual orientation. To temper the overly schematic fashion whereby historicist histories of homosexuality have distinguished and sealed off from each other sexual acts and sexual identities is not, I hope, to contribute to an anti-historicist backlash or to imply some permanent, historically invariable relation between particular sexual acts and individual sexual identities. Perhaps we need to supplement our notion of sexual identity with a more refined concept of, say, partial identity, emergent identity, transient identity, semi-identity, incomplete identity, proto-identity, or sub-identity.⁴⁸ In any case, my intent is not to reinstall a notion of sexual identity as a historical category so much as to indicate the *multiplicity of possible historical connections between sex and identity*, a multiplicity whose existence has been obscured by the necessary but narrowly focused, totalizing critique of sexual identity as a unitary concept. We need to find ways of asking how different historical cultures fashioned different sorts of links between sexual acts, on the one

hand, and sexual tastes, styles, dispositions, characters, gender presentations, and forms of subjectivity, on the other.

It is a matter of considerable irony that Foucault's influential distinction between the discursive construction of the sodomite and the discursive construction of the homosexual, which had originally been intended to open up a domain of historical inquiry, has now become a major obstacle blocking further research into the rudiments of sexual identity-formation in pre-modern and early modern European societies. Foucault himself would surely have been astonished. Not only was he much too good a historian ever to have authorized the incautious and implausible claim that no one had ever had a sexual subjectivity, a sexual morphology, or a sexual identity of any kind before the nineteenth century (even if he painstakingly demonstrated that the conditions necessary for having a *sexuality*, a psychosexual orientation in the modern sense, did not in fact obtain until then). His approach to what he called "the history of the present" was also too searching, too experimental, and too open-ended to tolerate converting a heuristic analytic distinction into an ill-founded historical dogma, as his more forgetful epigones have not hesitated to do.

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Of course, the chief thing about Foucault that his self-styled disciples forget is that he did not propound a theory of sexuality. That fact about Foucault is the more easily forgotten as Foucault has become, especially in the United States and Britain, the property of academic critical theorists—the property of those, in other words, whose claim to the professional title of "theorist" derives from the reflected status, authority, and "theoretical" credentials of the thinkers they study. As one of those thinkers whose identity as a "theorist" is necessary to ground the secondary and derived "theoretical" status of others, Foucault is required to have a theory. Theories, after all, are what "theorists" are supposed to have.

Now of course Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, volume I, is theoretical, in the sense that it undertakes a far-reaching critical intervention in the realm of theory. It is, more particularly, an effort to dislodge and to thwart the effects of already-established theories—theories that attempt to tell us the truth about sexuality, to produce true accounts of its nature, to specify what sexuality really is, to inquire into sexuality as a positive thing that has a truth that can be told, and to ground authoritative forms of expertise in an objective knowledge of sexuality. Foucault's radical theoretical take on sexuality consists in approaching it from the perspective of the history of discourses, as an element in a larger political-discursive

technology: he treats it accordingly not as a positive thing but as an instrumental effect, not as a physical or psychological reality but as a social and political device; he is not trying to describe what sexuality is but to specify what it does and how it works in discursive and institutional practice. That approach to sexuality represents a theoretical intervention insofar as it engages with already-existing theories of sexuality, but the nature of the engagement remains purely tactical: it is part of a larger strategic effort to effect a thoroughgoing evasion of theories of sexuality and to devise various means of circumventing their claims to specify the truth of sexuality—not by attempting to refute those claims directly and to install a new truth in their place but by attempting to expose and to delegitimize the strategies they employ to construct and to authorize their truth-claims in the first place. It is this deliberate, ardent, and considered resistance to "theory" that defines Foucault's own practice of theory, his distinctive brand of (theoretical) critique.⁴⁹

To undertake such a theoretical critique, to attempt to reorient our understanding of sexuality by approaching the history of sexuality from the perspective of the history of discourses, is obviously not to offer a new theory of sexuality, much less to try to substitute such a theory for those that already exist. Nor is it an attempt to claim, theoretically, that sexuality *is* discourse or that it is constituted discursively instead of naturally. It is rather an effort to denaturalize, dematerialize, and deidealize sexuality so as to prevent it from serving as the positive grounding for a theory of sexuality, to prevent it from answering to "the functional requirements of a discourse that must produce its truth."⁵⁰ It is an attempt to destroy the circuitry that connects sexuality, truth, and power. And thus it is an effort to take sexuality away from the experts and make it available to us as a possible source for a series of scholarly and political counterpractices. *The History of Sexuality*, volume I, in short, does not contain an original theory of sexuality. If anything, its theoretical originality lies in its refusal of existing theory and its consistent elaboration of a critical anti-theory. It offers a model demonstration of how to dismantle theories of sexuality, how to deprive them of their claims to legitimate authority. *The History of Sexuality*, volume I, is a difficult book to read chiefly because we read it as conveying Foucault's formulation of his theory of sexuality. (There is no easier way to baffle students than by asking them to explain what Foucault's own definition of "sexuality" is: it's the worst sort of trick question.) As a theory of sexuality, however, *The History of Sexuality*, volume I, is unreadable. That may in fact be its greatest virtue.

For our hankering after a correct theory of sexuality seems scarcely diminished since Foucault's day, least of all among academic practitioners

of so-called queer theory.⁵¹ By juxtaposing to this “theoretical” tendency in queer theory Foucault’s own example, by contrasting the queer retheorizing of sexuality with Foucault’s strategic undoing of sexual theory, I am not trying to lend aid and comfort to “the enemies of theory” (who would forget not just Foucault but “theory” itself), nor do I mean to contribute to the phobic totalization and homogenization of “theory”—as if there could possibly be any sense in treating theory as a unitary entity that could then be either praised or disparaged. To argue that *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, contains not a theory but a critical anti-theory is not to argue that the book is “anti” theory, against theory, but rather to indicate that its theoretical enterprise, which is the derealization or desubstantialization of sexuality, militates strenuously against the construction or vindication of any theory of sexuality. Moreover, no inquiry into the deficiencies of contemporary work in lesbian and gay studies or the history of sexuality that pretends to be serious can content itself with mere carping at individual scholarly abuses of “theory” (the notion that scholars nowadays have all been corrupted by “theory” is about as plausible as the notion that lesbian and gay academics have seized control of the universities—and probably derives from the same source); rather, it must take up such institutional questions as how many professors with qualifications in “queer theory” are tenured at major universities and are actually guiding the work of graduate students intending and able to pursue scholarly careers in that field.

Nonetheless, I find the doctrinaire theoretical tendencies in “queer theory” and in academic “critical theory” to be strikingly at odds with the anti-dogmatic, critical, and experimental impulses that originally animated a good deal of the work we now consider part of the canon of “theory.” Foucault stands out in this context as one of the few canonical theorists whose theoretical work seems calculated to resist theoretical totalization, premature theoretical closure, and thereby to resist the weirdest and most perverse instance of “the resistance to theory”: namely, the sort of resistance to theory that expresses itself *through* the now-standard academic practice of so-called critical theory itself.⁵² Foucault’s refusal of a theory of sexuality resists the complacencies of the increasingly dogmatic and reactionary resistance to theory that misleadingly and all too often answers to the name of “theory.” I believe it is our resistance to Foucault’s resistance to this resistance to theory, our insistence on transforming Foucault’s critical anti-theory into a theory of sexuality, that has led us to mistake his discursive analysis for a historical assertion—and that has licensed us, on that basis, to remake his strategic distinction between the sodomite and the homosexual into a conceptual distinction between sexual acts and sexual identities, into a bogus theoretical doctrine, and into a parently false set

of historical premises. I also believe it is what has led us to convert his strategic appeal to bodies and pleasures as a means of resistance to the apparatus of sexuality into a theoretical specification of the irreducible elements of sexuality. And it is what has made Foucault’s intellectual example increasingly and, quite properly, forgettable. If indeed it is as a theorist of sexuality that we remember Foucault, perhaps Baudrillard was right after all: the greatest service we can do to him, and to ourselves, is to forget him as quickly as possible.

Let me give the last word to Foucault, however. In an early essay on Gustave Flaubert, Foucault described an experience of the fantastic that he believed was new in the nineteenth century, “the discovery of a new imaginative space” in the archives of the library.

This domain of phantasms is no longer the night, the sleep of reason, or the uncertain void that stands before desire, but, on the contrary, wakefulness, untriting attention, zealous erudition, and constant vigilance. Henceforth, the visionary experience arises from the black and white surface of printed signs, from the closed and dusty volume that opens with a flight of forgotten words; fantasies are carefully deployed in the hushed library, with its columns of books, with its titles aligned on shelves to form a tight enclosure, but within confines that also liberate impossible worlds. The imaginary now resides between the book and the lamp. The fantastic is no longer a property of the heart, nor is it found among the intricacies of nature; it evolves from the accuracy of knowledge, and its treasures lie dormant in documents.⁵³

The history of sexuality, at its best, should serve as a reminder of the one thing that no one who has been touched by Foucault’s writing is likely ever to forget: namely, that the space of imaginative fantasy that the nineteenth century discovered in the library is not yet exhausted and that it may still prove to be productive—both for academic scholarship and for our ongoing processes of personal and cultural self-transformation.

24. For the most careful, responsible, and socially sensitive example of such an effort, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), from whose example I have learned a great deal.

25. My invocation of "historicism" here is therefore poles apart from Dipesh Chakrabarty's in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6-8 ff. Chakrabarty understands "historicism" as part of a nineteenth-century Western European ideology of progress, according to which less developed nations must follow a linear path of historical evolution that will lead them to resemble, in time, the currently more developed ones. Chakrabarty explicitly contrasts what he calls "historicism" with the approach represented by Foucault, who indeed enables us to think historical change beyond ideas of progress. Elsewhere in *Provincializing Europe* Chakrabarty speaks more aptly of "historicization" (101) or "historicizing" (112), rather than historicism. It is precisely a non-colonial relation to the past that historicism, as I understand it, is dedicated to instantiating.

26. See, esp., Chakrabarty's essay, "Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts," in *Provincializing Europe*, 97-113 (quotations on 109).

27. Jean Le Bitoux, "Le Gai Savoir: Entretien avec Michel Foucault," *La revue h*, 2 (automne 1996): 42-54, esp. 50.

28. Dr. Charles Silverstein and Edmund White, *The Joy of Gay Sex: An Intimate Guide for Gay Men to the Pleasures of a Gay Lifestyle* (New York: Crown, 1977), 10-11. See also 185-87: "Since the advent of feminism and gay liberation, 'role-playing' has taken on a decidedly negative aura. . . . To the gay liberationist role-playing conjures up a picture of two men living out a grotesque parody of heterosexual married life. . . . The disadvantages of role-playing are manifold and increasingly obvious. . . . In the late sixties, the birth of modern feminism and gay liberation called for the abolition of all role-playing."

29. Renaldo Arenas, *Before Night Falls*, trans. Dolores M. Koch (New York: Viking, 1993), 106.

30. W. Thomas MacCary, *Childlike Achilles: Ontogeny and Phylogeny in the "Iliad"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), x.

31. Some of my readers may scoff at this example of historiographical aspiration, thinking that no one today would formulate the aim of historical research in such terms. But the goal of classical scholarship has remained largely unchanged since it was articulated by the great German classicists of the late nineteenth century: it is to arrive, through a strenuous, conscious, and systematic bracketing of modern assumptions and preconceptions, at something approximating the original experience of the ancient peoples themselves. The rigors of training in classical scholarship are ideologically justified by that goal, inasmuch as nothing short of immense linguistic and historical erudition can enable people living thousands of years afterward to reconstruct, to the maximum extent possible, what was actually going on in the minds of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Anyone who doubts that classical philology continues to formulate its aims and purpose in these terms should consider the following statement: "When reading a text, most of all a work of prosaic or poetic art, it is the duty of the interpreter to find out with all tools available to him [sic] the intention with which the author wrote his [sic] work. At least I hope what Virgil had in mind composing his *Aeneid* will by most interpreters be ascribed to the will of the poet and not to the performance of social agents.

Exploring this intention by the ways just described, but nothing else, is philology." That statement was not made in the nineteenth century but on July 23, 2001, by Christoph Kugelmeier of the Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken, in the *Byn Mauw Classical Review*, 01.07.23 (<http://cart.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/>). I have added my own italics.

32. See Stephen O. Murray, *Homosexualities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2-3: "While relationships structured by age, gender, profession, and comradeship may coexist in a society, one of them tends to be more visible 'on the ground,' both among those who are native to the society and in explanation to aliens who ask about same-sex sexual relations."

33. On global differences in patterns of same-sex sexual practice, see, for example, Gary Smith, "Heterosexual and Homosexual Anal Intercourse: An International Perspective," *Venezology* 14, no. 1 (2001): 28-37.

34. For a recent elegant and persuasive demonstration of the historical difference made by the emergence of sexuality, see Alan Bray and Michel Rey, "The Body of the Friend: Continuity and Change in Masculine Friendship in the Seventeenth Century," in *English Masculinities, 1660-1800*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 65-84.

35. Alan Sinfield, *Gay and After* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1988), 44. See, also, Alan Sinfield, "The Production of Gay and the Return of Power," in *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representations beyond the Metropolis*, ed. Richard Phillips, Diane Wart, and David Shuttleton (London: Routledge, 2000), 21-36, esp. 22: "Metropolitan gay and lesbian concepts should be regarded, therefore, not as denoting the ultimate achievement of human sexuality, but as something we have been producing—we homosexuals and we heterosexuals—in determinate economic and social conditions."

CHAPTER ONE

1. For all of the information and the quotations in this paragraph, I am indebted to David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), esp. 358-60. See, further, Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories, I et II: 1980-1990* (1987, 1990; reprint ed., Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1993), 139-42, esp. 140 ("L'oublier était lui rendre service, l'aduler était le desservir"), and 139 ("Mort de Foucault. Perte de confiance en son propre génie. . . . La perte des systèmes immunitaires, en dehors de tout aspect sexuel, n'est que la transcription biologique de l'autre processus").

For some resummptions of the "forget Foucault" theme, see E. Greblo, "Dimenticare Foucault?" *Aur-Aur* 242 (March-April 1991): 79-90; Kate Soper, "Forget Foucault?" *New Formations* 25 (summer 1995): 21-27.

2. Baudrillard delivers himself of this enlightened opinion in the course of an interview with F. Rötzer, "Virtuelle Katastrophen," *Kunstforum* (January-February 1990), 266; I reproduce here the quotation and citation provided by Douglas Cimp, "Portraits of People with AIDS," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 117-33 (quotation on 130).

3. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 159; cf. Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, vol. 1 of *Histoire de la sexualité* (1976; reprint ed., Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 211. Whenever possible, I quote the English text of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, because it is that text that has influenced Foucault's Anglophone disciples, with whom I am concerned

in this essay, but I have altered the published translation whenever necessary to restore Foucault's original emphasis or meaning.

4. For example, in an interview published in *La Quinzaine littéraire* in early January 1977, to promote *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Foucault described as the book's point of departure the premise that "the idea of sex is internal to the apparatus of sexuality, and that what is to be found at the root of the latter is not the rejection of sex but a quite definite, specific economy of bodies and of pleasure" [l'idée de sexe était intérieure au dispositif de la sexualité et que par conséquent ce qu'on doit retrouver à sa racine, ce n'est pas le sexe refusé, c'est une économie positive des corps et du plaisir] (Michel Foucault, "Les rapports de pouvoir passent à l'intérieur des corps," in *Dis et écrits*, 1954-1988, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald [Paris: Gallimard, 1994], 3:228-36 [quotation on 234]). English translations of this text have appeared, under the title "The History of Sexuality" in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1980), 183-93, and under the title "Power Affects the Body" in *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961-1984)*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 207-13.

5. Similarly, in "Les rapports de pouvoir passent à l'intérieur des corps," 235, Foucault goes on to call not for "liberation" but "desexualization," that is, "a general economy of pleasure which would not be sexually normed" [une économie générale du plaisir qui ne soit pas sexuellement normée].

6. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:157. See, further, David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 92-97.

7. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:157 (emended), and *La volonté de savoir*, 208.

8. Stephen O. Murray, *Homosexualities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 111n, claims that I have "slipped 'sodomite' into the opposition Foucault made (in French, not just in translation into English) between 'sodomy' (an act) and 'the homosexual' (a kind of person)." Murray evidently did not read to the end of the famous paragraph by Foucault quoted below.

9. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:43 (translation considerably modified); *La volonté de savoir*, 59.

10. This view has been contested by Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), esp. 42, 44, 163.

11. In a passage that provides the closest textual and historical parallel in Foucault's writings to the famous passage in *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Foucault seems to distinguish between sodomy and homosexuality in much the same terms as do those historians of sexuality whose views I am criticizing here. The passage occurs in a book-length transcript of six taped interviews with a young gay man named Thierry Voeltzel that Foucault recorded during the summer of 1976, just as he was completing *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, and that he arranged to have published under Voeltzel's name. At one point in the conversation the anonymous interviewer (i.e., Foucault) makes the following observation: "The category of the homosexual was invented lately. It didn't use to exist; what existed was sodomy, that is to say a certain number of sexual practices which, in themselves, were condemned, but the homosexual individual did not exist." [La catégorie de l'homosexuel a été inventée tardivement. Ça n'existait pas, ce qui existait, c'était la sodomie, c'est-à-dire un certain nombre de pratiques sexuelles qui, elles, étaient

condamnées, mais l'individu homosexuel n'existait pas]. See Thierry Voeltzel, *Vingt ans et après* (Paris: Grasset, 1978), 33.

In this conversation with Voeltzel, Foucault may sound as if he's saying that once upon a time there were only sexual acts, not sexual actors. (That is how Didier Eribon interprets the passage: see Eribon, *Réflexions sur la question gay* [Paris: Fayard, 1999], 372-442, trans. Michael Lucey as "Michel Foucault's Histories of Sexuality," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7, no. 1 [2001]: 3-1-86.) Note, however, that Foucault is simplifying matters for the benefit of his decidedly unacademic interlocutor; that, even so, he stops short of making a formal distinction between acts and identities; and that he never says that before the nineteenth century there were no sexual identities, only sexual acts. What preoccupies him in his exchange with Voeltzel, just as in *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, is the relatively recent invention of the normalizing "category" of the homosexual, the discursive constitution of a class of deviant individuals as opposed to the mere enumeration of a set of forbidden practices; when he refers to "the homosexual individual," he is referring to the entity constructed by the modern discourses of psychiatry and sexology. It is only lately, Foucault emphasizes in his interview with Voeltzel, that it has become almost impossible simply to pursue the pleasures of homosexual contact, as Voeltzel appears to have done, "just so, when you felt like it, every once in a while, or in phases" [comme ça, quand tu en avais envie, par moments, ou par phases], without being forced to deduce from one's own behavior that one is homosexual, without being interpellated by the culpabilizing category of "the homosexual." Voeltzel's narrative therefore reminds Foucault of an earlier historical period when it was possible to *practise* homosexuality without *being* homosexual.

As time went by, and Foucault's thinking about the history of sexuality evolved, he abandoned the contrast between sodomy and homosexuality along with the implicit opposition between practices and persons and came up with new ways of representing the differences between modern and pre-modern forms of same-sex sexual experience. In 1982, for example, in a review of the French translation of K. J. Dover's 1978 monograph, *Greek Homosexuality*, Foucault wrote:

Of course, there will still be some folks disposed to think that, in the final analysis, homosexuality has always existed. . . . To such naive souls Dover gives a good lesson in historical nominalism. [Sexual] relations between two persons of the same sex are one thing. But to love the same sex as oneself, to take one's pleasure in that sex, is quite another thing, it's a whole experience, with its own objects and their meanings, with a specific way of being on the part of the subject and a consciousness which he has of himself. That experience is complex, it is diverse, it takes different forms, it changes.

[Bien sûr, on trouvera encore des esprits aimables pour penser qu'en somme l'homosexualité a toujours existé. . . . A de tels naïfs, Dover donne une bonne leçon de nominalisme historique. Le rapport entre deux individus du même sexe est une chose. Mais aimer le même sexe que soi, prendre avec lui un plaisir, c'est autre chose, c'est toute une expérience, avec ses objets et leurs valeurs, avec la manière d'être du sujet et la conscience qu'il a de lui-même. Cette expérience est complexe, elle est diverse, elle change de formes.]

(Michel Foucault, "Des caresses d'hommes considérées comme un art," *Libération*, 1 June 1982, 27, reprinted in *Dis et écrits*, 4:315-17 [quotation on 315-16])

Here Foucault inveighs against applying to the Greeks an undifferentiated, ahistorical, and transcendental notion of homosexuality defined purely behaviorally, in terms of sexual practice ("sexual relations between two persons of the same sex"), in favor of a more nuanced, contextualized understanding that foregrounds specific, conscious "ways of being" on the part of different historical and sexual subjects. That is very much in keeping with Foucault's emphasis in his famous 1981 interview in *Le gai pitié* on homosexuality as a "way of life" (*mode de vie*): Michel Foucault, "De l'amitié comme mode de vie," *Le gai pitié* 25 (April 1981): 38-39, trans. John Johnston in *Foucault Live*, 308-12. But now it is not so much a question of opposing "sexual practices" to categories of individuals, as Foucault was inclined to do in 1976; rather, it is a question of systematically defining different historical forms of sexual experience—different ways of being, different sets of relations to others and to oneself, different articulations of pleasure and meaning, different forms of consciousness. The exact terms in which such historical discriminations are to be made, however, remain unspecified. Foucault leaves that practical question of historical analysis and methodology to the individual historian. He is content simply to offer a model of how to proceed in the second and third volumes of his own unfinished *History of Sexuality*.

12. For example, Murray, in *Homosexualities*, 8n, appears to ascribe to me the absurd view that "no one before 1869 or non-Western has noticed and been interested in who has sex with what kinds of persons." Giulia Sissa, also summarizing what she takes to be my position, writes, "Before sexuality one does not find homosexuality but only a variety of sexual acts; not an identity, only a freedom of choice"; she bizarrely takes this view to be equivalent to claiming that there is no difference between classical Athens and contemporary San Francisco. See Sissa, "Sexual Bodybuilding: Aeschines against Timarchus," in *Constructions of the Classical Body*, ed. James I. Porter (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 147-68 (esp. 147 and 164). My own view is rather more nuanced than the one Sissa attributes to me, and I have tried to be precise in articulating it: "Before the scientific construction of 'sexuality' as a supposedly 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 characterized, 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" (David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* [New York: Routledge, 1990], 26, boldface added). The contrast here is between acts, tastes, and inclinations, on the one hand, and the modern sexological concept of sexual orientation, on the other. For a further refinement of this view, see my essay, "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," in this volume.

13. See, for example, Mary McIntosh, "The Homosexual Role," *Social Problems* 16 (1968/69): 182-92; Randolph Trumbach, "London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behavior and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 11 (1977): 1-33; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The*

Regulation of Sexuality since 1800 (London: Longmans, 1981); Arnold I. Davidson, "Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality," *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 1 (1987): 16-48; John D'Emilio and Estelle D. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Homosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995); Carolyn J. Dean, *Sexuality and Modern Western Culture* (New York: Twayne, 1996).

14. See the very careful demonstration of this point by Arnold I. Davidson, "Closing up the Corpses: Diseases of Sexuality and the Emergence of the Psychiatric Style of Reasoning," in *Meaning and Method: Essays in Honor of Hilary Putnam*, ed. George Boolos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 295-325.

15. For a similar argument to the same effect, see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Prostitution and the Question of Sexual Identity in Medieval Europe," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 159-77. Karras's article appeared after the original version of "Forgetting Foucault" was published, but Karras arrived at her conclusions independently. Karras's and my approaches have been helpfully compared and assessed by Carla Freccero, "Acts, Identities, and Sexuality's (Pre)Modern Regimes," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 186-92. Karras freely speaks of "sexuality" and "sexual identity" in pre-modern Europe: "I expect Halperin would disagree with much of what I have said here," she remarks in a rejoinder to Freccero's critique, "but I find his formulations useful nonetheless" (see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Response: Identity, Sexuality, and History," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 2 [1999]: 193-198 [quotation on 198n. 19]). I admit that I find Karras's treatment of the theoretical issues lacking in precision, care, and nuance, and I would not be likely to speak so incautiously about "sexuality" or "sexual identity" in reference to Karras's material, but I welcome her important and persuasive historical argument for the existence of identity categories in European discourses of sex in the medieval period. In that respect, her work is very much in line with the thesis of this essay.

See, also, Jeffrey Merrick, "Sodomitical Inclinations in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 3 (1997): 289-94, who insists that "the more we learn about early modern sexual subcultures, the more reason we have to question, or at least to qualify, Michel Foucault's celebrated assertion that sodomites were nothing more than the 'juridical subjects' of sodomy before the nineteenth century" (quotation on 293). I wish to thank Norman Jones for calling my attention to this passage. Foucault, I shall argue, was not making an assertion about actual sexual practices, and so it is not his assertion that will need to be qualified.

16. Foucault's French text, ironically, allows more scope for misinterpretation than the English-language version, which explicitly emphasizes that the relevant sense of the term "sodomy" in this passage is determined by the formal discursive context of medieval civil and canon law. In Foucault's original formulation, the unambiguous initial phrase "as defined by" does not occur; instead, we find a more offhand reference to "the sodomy of the old civil and canonical codes." Foucault, it seems, didn't feel the need to be so careful about instructing his French readers to understand "sodomy" here as a strictly discursive category rather than as a sexual practice or as a cultural representation; instead, it is Foucault's translator who has expanded the original formulation in order to make its meaning clear. As I am concerned with the misreadings of Foucault by

scholars who work largely from the published translation of *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, and as my exegesis of Foucault is facilitated by (without at all depending on) the greater explicitness of the English-language version, I have not hesitated to cite it in my text for the sake of clarity, jettisoning it later once the interpretive point has been established.

17. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:42-43; *La volonté de savoir*, 58-59. Emphasis in original.

18. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:37 (translation modified); *La volonté de savoir*, 51. Emphasis added.

19. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:38 (translation modified); *La volonté de savoir*, 52-53. Foucault explains, in a sentence that follows the conclusion of the passage quoted here, that "the 'nature' on which [sexual prohibitions] were based was still a kind of law."

20. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:48; *La volonté de savoir*, 66.

21. A complete and systematic definition of the Latin form of this ancient term has now been provided by Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 175-78, esp. 175-76.

The word most often used to describe a man who had been anally penetrated was the noun *cinaedus*. But . . . *cinaedus* is not actually anchored in that specific sexual practice. . . . It refers instead to a man who has an identity as gender deviant. In other words, a *cinaedus* is a man who fails to live up to traditional standards of masculine comportment, and one way in which he may do so is by seeking to be penetrated; but that is merely a symptom of a deeper disorder, his gender deviance. Indeed, the word's etymology suggests no direct connection to any sexual practice. Rather, borrowed from Greek *kinaidos* (which may itself have been a borrowing from a language of Asia Minor), it primarily signifies an effeminate dancer who entertained his audiences with a *tympanum* or tambourine in his hand, and adopted a lascivious style, often suggestively wiggling his buttocks in such a way as to suggest anal intercourse. . . . The primary meaning of *cinaedus* never died out; the term never became a dead metaphor.

And Williams concludes, "In sum, the word *cinaedus* originally referred to men who were professional dancers of a type associated with the East, dancing with a *tympanum* and seductively wiggling their buttocks in such a way as to suggest anal intercourse. In a transferred sense it came to describe a man who was not a dancer but who displayed the salient characteristics of a *cinaedus* in the strict sense: he was a gender-deviant, a 'non-man' who broke the rules of masculine comportment and whose effeminate disorder might be embodied in the particular symptom of seeking to be penetrated" (178).

22. John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 45-46. The formulation is repeated, somewhat less emphatically, by Winkler in "Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men's Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens," 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, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 171-209, esp. 176-77.

23. I borrow the distinction between universalizing and minoritizing concepts of (homo)sexual identity from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1, 9, 85-86.

24. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, 50ⁿ and "Laying Down the Law," 182.

25. See, for example, Plato, *Gorgias* 494C-E (quoted and discussed by Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, 53).

26. For ancient physiological explanations, see pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems* 4.26; Phaedrus, 4.15 (16). For imputations of mental disease, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.5.3-4 (1148b26-31); *Pratap* 46.2; Seneca, *Natural Questions* 1.16.1-3; Dio Cassius 80.1.6.1-5; Caelius Aurelianus, *On Chronic Diseases* 4.9. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, to whom I owe the foregoing citation from the *Pratap*, also provides additional parallels (Seneca, *Letters* 83.20; Juvenal, *Satires* 2.17 and 2.50), noting, however, that "a predilection for various kinds of excessive or disgraceful behavior was capable of being called a disease" by the Romans (he cites a number of compelling instances of such a usage) and therefore "*cinaedi* were not said to be *morboosi* in the way that twentieth-century homosexuals have been pitted or scorned as 'sick'" (181). The medicalizing language, in other words, does not operate in the two cultures in the same way; nor does it give rise to the same kind of disqualification. The point is an important one: the ancient usage is disapproving, but it is not wholly pathologizing.

27. Maud W. Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.," in *Before Sexuality*, ed. Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin, 389-415 (quotation on 390), *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 58.

28. Gleason, *Making Men*, 64; Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender," 396.

29. Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender," 411-12. Cf. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 22-24.

30. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 178.

31. *Ibid.*, 210-11.

32. For an expansion of this argument, see the quotation from Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, in n. 21, above. Of course, the distinction between gender and sexuality, or between gender identity and sexual object-choice, is artificial, to say the least. Gender identity often is loaded with sexual identity and erotic subjectivity, and in any particular cultural context gender is bound to be quite specifically "subjectified" or "subjectivated." Thus, Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 215-18, inquires into the *cinaedus* as a desiring subject. Don Kulick has also warned us against tightly compartmentalizing transgender identity (which is what the *cinaedus* may, in part, embody) as a purely gendered identity, totally independent from matters of erotic desire (see his *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998]; see also his "Problematic Childhood Sexuality" [paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Philadelphia, 2-6 December 1999]).

33. In an extended series of essays, much discussed and generally well received by professional classicists in the United States and the United Kingdom, Amy Richlin has assailed the historical work of Winkler, myself, and our collaborators (such as Gleason), all of whom she lumps together under the uncompromising (not to say phobic) title of "Foucaultians." (See Amy Richlin, review of *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, by

David M. Halperin, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2, no. 1 [1991]: 16–18, “Zeus and Meis: Foucault, Feminism, Classics,” *Helios* 18, no. 2 [autumn 1991]: 160–80, introduction to *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*, rev. ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], xiii–xxxiii, introduction to *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], xi–xxiii, “Not before Homosexuality: The Materiality of the *Kindaios* and the Roman Law against Love between Men,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3, no. 4 [April 1993]: 523–73, “The Ethnographer’s Dilemma and the Dream of a Lost Golden Age,” in *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, ed. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin [New York: Routledge, 1993], 272–303, “Towards a History of Body History,” in *Inventing Ancient Culture: Historicism, Periodization, and the Ancient World*, ed. Mark Gooden and Peter Tooley [London: Routledge, 1997], 16–35, and “Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*: A Useful Theory for Women?” in *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity*, ed. David H. J. Larmour, Paul Allen Miller, and Charles Platner [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998], 138–70.)

Richlin faults us in particular for approaching the figure of the *kindaios* from the standpoint of ancient sexual discourses. She prefers to see in that figure a material embodiment of “homosexuality,” which she regards as a useful category for analyzing ancient societies—although she concedes that “there was no ancient word for ‘homosexual’” (“Not before Homosexuality,” 530; also, 571, where Richlin describes her work as employing “a model that uses ‘homosexuality’ as a category for analyzing ancient societies” [and in the revised introduction to *The Garden of Priapus*, Richlin insists that her approach is distinguished by its “essentialism” and “materialism” (xx)]. For a lucid survey of Richlin’s equivocations on the issue of whether or not *kindaios* should be described as “homosexuals,” see Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 355, n. 319.

Much could be said about the gaps in Richlin’s argument, about its simplistic treatment of the interpretive issues, or about its unappetizing but evidently highly palatable combination of an old-fashioned positivism with a more fashionable blend of political and professional opportunism. (Compare, for example, the following two statements by Richlin, both of them made in the revised introduction to *The Garden of Priapus*: “I suggest that Foucault’s work on antiquity is so ill-informed that it is not really worth reading” [xxix, n. 2], and “Thus *The Garden of Priapus*, though it originated in a different critical space from Foucauldian work, exhibits some similar traits, a true Foucauldian child of its time. . . . I accept wholeheartedly the approach that melds anthropology with history: I define humor as a discourse of power; I view texts as artifacts; I am seeking to piece together social norms by juxtaposing different kinds of evidence that seem to describe different realities, and I am examining what produces those disparities” [xxvii].) In other words: “Everything Foucault said was wrong, and besides I said it first.”) Indeed, the ferocity and tenacity of Richlin’s polemics have largely succeeded in intimidating and silencing public expressions of disagreement with her. For two exceptions, see the review of *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* by Earl Jackson Jr., *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 3 (1992): 387–96, and Marilyn B. Skinner, “Zeus and Leda: The Sexual Wars in Contemporary Classical Scholarship,” *Thamyris* 3, no. 1 (spring 1996): 103–23.

The point I need to make here about Richlin’s critique is that it is doubly ignorant and misinformed—wrong, that is, both about Foucault and about so-called Foucaultians. In the first case, Richlin claims that in the famous passage from *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, “Foucault is distinguishing . . . between behavior and essence”; in

the second case, she maintains that accounts of sex in antiquity by “Foucaultians” such as Winkler and myself “start from this axiom” (“Not before Homosexuality,” 525). In fact, as I have tried to show here, Foucault was not distinguishing between anything so metaphysical as behavior and essence but simply between two different discursive strategies for disqualifying male love. Winkler and Gleason, moreover, far from adhering uncritically to the erroneous reading of Foucault that Richlin herself propounds, explicitly challenged the misapplication of such a pseudo-Foucauldian “axiom” to the interpretation of the figure of the *kindaios*. And in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* I made a rigorous distinction between a sexual orientation in the modern sense and the kinds of sexual identity current in the ancient Greek world; the latter, I argued, tended to be determined by a person’s gender and social status rather than by a personal psychology. And I was careful to emphasize in a number of passages that it was possible for sexual acts to be linked in various ways with a sexual disposition or sexual subjectivity well before the nineteenth century. (See the passage quoted in n. 12 above. For other examples, see *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 8: “A certain identification of the self with the sexual self began in late antiquity; it was strengthened by the Christian confessional. Only in the high middle ages did certain kinds of sexual acts start to get identified with certain specifically sexual types of person: a ‘sodomite’ begins to name not merely the person who commits an act of sodomy but one distinguished by a certain type of specifically sexual subjectivity”; 48: the *kindaios* is a “life-form.”) Richlin’s “Foucaultians,” no less than her Foucault, are the product and projection of her own misreadings. Why her misreadings have been so widely, and so uncritically, acclaimed is another question, an interesting one in its own right, but this is not the place to pursue it.

34. Jonathan Walters, “‘No More Than a Boy’: The Shifting Construction of Masculinity from Ancient Greece to the Middle Ages,” *Gender and History* 5, no. 1 (spring 1993): 20–33.

35. *Ibid.*, 22–23, quoting Aputleius, *The Golden Ass* 9.14.

36. See Walters, “‘No More Than a Boy,’” 22. On April 13, 2001, Professor Carla Freccero of the University of California, Santa Cruz, presented a critique of my argument in a paper delivered at the University of Michigan, entitled “Were Fourteenth Century Perugia Homophobic? Foucault, Halperin, and Early Modern Sexual Subjectivities.” I did not hear the paper myself, and Freccero has not shared it with me, and so I have been unable to take advantage of her remarks in reformulating my argument here.

37. Walters, “‘No More Than a Boy,’” 24.

38. *Ibid.*, 26: “In Boccaccio’s version . . . we find the husband defined wholly in terms of his sexual desire, which marks him as abnormal from the start and indeed sets the plot in motion.”

39. Compare *ibid.*, 24–25. For the common view in Florentine texts of the period that sodomites “had little erotic interest in women,” see Michael Roche, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 40–41, 123 ff., who also provides a useful survey of other literary portraits of sodomites in contemporary Italian *novelle*, many of which correspond in a number of respects to Boccaccio’s portrait of Pietro di Vincolo (123 ff. and 295, n. 79). Roche also points out, however, that many Florentine sources, both literary and judicial, presume that a man with sodomitical desires for boys might equally desire insertive sex with women (124–27).

40. Walters, “‘No More Than a Boy,’” 27, also emphasizes this point.

41. See, further, *ibid.*, 27–28. Whereas the ancient conception of the *kinaidos* foregrounds his effeminacy and passivity, the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florentine definitions of “sodomy” and “sodomite” referred only to the “active” or insertive partner in anal intercourse: see Locke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 14, 110. Cesare Segre, the editor of my text of Boccaccio, gets this point exactly wrong when he says, in a note, that the Perugian regarded Pietro as *un inventito* (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Opere*, ed. Cesare Segre [Milan: Mursia, 1966], 1280). Pietro is a sodomite but, unlike the *kinaidos*, he is not transgendered, or an invert.

42. An erotic temperament midway between that of Apuleius’s baker and Boccaccio’s Pietro is represented a century before Apuleius in a two-line poem by the Roman poet Martial, *Epigrams* 2.49.

Uxorem nolo Telesiam ducere: quare?
moecha est: sed pueris dat Telesina. *vollo.*

[I don’t want to take Telesina for my wife. —Why not?
She’s an adulteress. —But Telesina puts out for boys. —I’ll take her!]

As Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 27, to whom I owe this reference, explains, Martial’s joke depends on the background knowledge that a longstanding traditional punishment for adultery in the classical world was anal rape of the male offender. The man imagined in the epigram overcomes his initial reluctance to marry Telesina when it is pointed out to him that her bad character will procure him endless opportunities for enacting a sweet revenge on her youthful partners. Martial’s satirical epigram constructs an outlandish scenario in which a man is so fond of insertive anal sex with boys that he is willing to enter into a disgraceful and corrupt marriage merely in order to expand his possibilities for enjoying it. Exaggeration is part of the joke; nonetheless, as Williams—who also cites the passage from Apuleius in this connection—demonstrates with abundant argumentation and evidence, the imaginary husband’s preference falls well within the range of acceptable male sexual tastes in Roman culture.

43. Walters, “‘No More Than a Boy,’” 26–27, overstates the case, I believe, when he writes, “What we see in Boccaccio’s version of the story is one of the earliest portrayals in Western culture of a man defined by his sexuality, which is somehow his most deeply defining characteristic, and which tells ‘the truth’ about him. We witness here an early form of the constitution and demarcation of the field of sexuality.” Compare Glenn W. Olsen, “St. Anselm and Homosexuality,” *Anselm Studies: An Occasional Journal* (Special issue: “Proceedings of the Fifth International Saint Anselm Conference: St. Anselm and St. Augustine—Episcopi ad Saecula,” ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt et al.), vol. 2 (1988), 93–141, esp. 102–3:

If one were to eliminate from Boswell’s book [*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*] all the materials which do not satisfy his definition of “gay,” one might arguably be left with the truly novel and important observation that, as far as the Middle Ages are concerned, it was about 1100 in certain poems of Marbod of Rennes, and then later in the century in writers like Bernard of Cluny and Walter of Châtillon, and above all in the late twelfth century “A Debate between Ganymede

and Helen,” that we might see the appearance of a clear erotic preference for one’s own sex that, by still being called “sodomy,” began the expansion of that term into the modern “homosexuality.”

(See also 129–30, n. 61, and 133, n. 87.) Olsen puts the point very clearly, and in fact he might have been speaking of Boccaccio’s Pietro di Vinciolo, although Boccaccio never uses the term “sodomy” in reference to Pietro.

Nonetheless, I would still want to insist that mere sexual object-choice, even the settled and habitual preference for sexual relations with persons of the same sex as oneself, falls short of the definitional requirements of “(homo)sexuality” or “sexual orientation.” After all, such exclusive sexual preferences were not unknown in the ancient world: see my partial list of citations in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 163, n. 53. A “sexuality” in the modern sense would seem to require considerably more than merely same-sex sexual object-choice, more even than conscious erotic preference. In particular, “homosexuality” requires, first of all, that homosexual object-choice itself function as a marker of difference, of social and sexual deviance, independent of the gender identification or sexual role (active or passive) performed or preferred by the individual; second, it requires that homosexual object-choice be connected with a psychology, an inner orientation of the individual, not just an aesthetics or a form of erotic commiseration. See *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 24–29, esp. 26–27 with notes; for more recent expansions of that argument, see my essays, “Historicizing the Subject of Desire,” in this volume, which documents several instances of same-sex sexual object-choice, and even of conscious erotic preferences for persons of the same sex as oneself, that nonetheless do not satisfy the criteria for homosexuality, and “How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality,” which makes the conceptual distinctions in more detail. In the absence of the distinctively modern set of connections linking sexual object-choice, inner orientation, and deviant personality with notions of identity and difference, the substantive category of “homosexuality” dissolves into the descriptive category of “men who have sex with men” (an artifact of AIDS epidemiology, not a sexuality per se), and homosexually active but otherwise non-gay-identified men escape interpellation by the category of “homosexuality.”

44. I have chosen to dwell on the figure of Boccaccio’s Pietro di Vinciolo not because I believe he is somehow typical or representative of medieval sodomites in general but because he provides the starkest possible contrast with the ancient figure of the *kinaidos*: the latter represents an instance of sexual morphology without sexual subjectivity, or so at least I am contending for the purposes of this argument, whereas Pietro represents an instance of sexual subjectivity without sexual morphology. I do not mean to imply that constructions of the sodomite in pre-modern Europe mostly or even typically emphasized sexual subjectivity at the expense of sexual morphology, or that the sodomite was never thought to have a peculiar sensibility or style of gender presentation or appearance (on the gradual expansion of the term “sodomy,” see Olsen, “St. Anselm and Homosexuality,” 102–3). It is precisely the aim of this essay to open up such questions for further research.

45. This is not to deny that some lesbians can be conventionally feminine or that some gay men can be conventionally masculine and that both can pass for straight—some can and some do—but rather to insist that modern concepts and images of homosexuality have never been able to escape being haunted by the specter of gender inversion, gender deviance, or at least some kind of visibly legible difference. For a systematic

and brilliant exploration of this issue, see Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994). See, also, Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

46. For a further elaboration of this point, see "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," 128-34, esp. 131.

47. I wish to thank Carolyn Dinshaw for pointing out to me that the term "identity" is absent from Foucault's text.

48. Compare Alan Sinfield, *Cultural Politics—Queer Reading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 14, noting that pre-modern histories of homosexuality by social-constructionist historians "tend to discover ambivalent or partial signs of subjectivity; they catch not the absence of the modern subject, but its emergence." He adds, "I suspect that what we call gay identity has, for a long time, been always in the process of getting constituted." This last remark closes off, rather too glibly, the historiographic and conceptual issues before us.

49. I elaborate further on this point in "The Art of Not Being Governed: Michel Foucault on Critique and Transgression," to be published in *boundary 2*.

50. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:68.

51. I wish to thank Lee Edelman for discussing the issues in this paragraph with me, for his persistent critiques of this section of my essay, and for supplying me with a number of the formulations now contained in it.

A notable exception to this hankering on the part of "queer theorists" for a correct theory of sexuality is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993): 1-16, esp. 11: "The thing I *least* want to be heard as offering here is a theory of homosexuality? I have none and I want none." See, also, Jordan, *The Invention of Sodom*, 5: "I myself tend to think that we have barely begun to gather [historical] evidence of same-sex desire. We are thus very far from being able to imagine having a finished theory." Statements to this effect in works of so-called queer theory are rather less frequent than one might imagine.

52. For the notion that theory is ultimately "the universal theory of the impossibility of theory" and therefore that "nothing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory is itself this resistance," see Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 3-20 (quotation on 19). For a further exploration of these paradoxes, see the scathing remarks of Paul Morrison, "Paul de Man: Resistance and Collaboration," *Representations* 32 (fall 1990): 50-74.

53. Michel Foucault, "Fantasia of the Library," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practical Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. and trans. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 87-109 (quotation on 90). This passage was originally brought to my attention by James W. Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1990), 183.

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CHAPTER TWO

Previous versions or sections of this argument have appeared, in somewhat more specialized form, as "Response: Halperin on Brooten on Brooten," *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (<http://ccar.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/>), 97.1.2.3 (5 December 1997), "Lesbian

Historiography before the Name? Commentary," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4, no. 4 (1998): 539-78, and "Sex, Sexuality, and Sexual Classification," in *Critical Terms for Gender Studies*, ed. Gilbert Herdt and Catharine R. Stimpson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), in press.

1. For recent examples of contrasting approaches to the problem of how to balance continuities and discontinuities in feminist and gay male historiography, see Judith M. Bennett, "Confronting Continuity," *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 3 (autumn 1997): 73-94; and David M. Halperin, "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," in this volume.

2. See D. Graham J. Shipley's entry on Lesbos in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 845.

3. Chapter 21 of Aldous Huxley's *Artic Havy* (London: Flamingo, 1994), 226.

4. For a detailed survey of the evidence, on which my summary is based, see Peter F. Dorsey, "Before Lesbianism" (unpublished manuscript, in the possession of Professor John Rardin of the University of Texas at San Antonio).

5. Bernadette J. Brooten translates the phrase "unwilling to let men do it to them," more literally but less idiomatically, as "who are unwilling to suffer 'it' from men"; see her "Lesbian Historiography before the Name? Response," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4, no. 4 (1998): 606-30 (quotation on 619).

6. Alan Cameron, "Love (and Marriage) between Women," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 39 (1998): 137-56 (quotation on 149n. 36 [emphasis mine]).

7. That what Lucian is describing is tribadism and not lesbianism is even clearer in Lucian's Greek, where "women like that" (which is a translation of the single word *hoianias*) refers back to the noun *hetairistria*: "I don't know what you mean, unless she's a *hetairistria*—they say there are women like that [or "such women"] in Lesbos," etc. In other words, "they say there are *hetairistria* in Lesbos" etc. Since there is considerable evidence (discussed in my text, below) that *hetairistria* is a synonym of "tribade," the reference to "women like that in Lesbos" is, in context, mostly likely an allusion specifically to tribadism.

8. On this text, see Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homocoticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5, and the detailed, convincing critique of her interpretation of Arethas's usage by Cameron, "Love (and Marriage) between Women," 144-49.

9. Two authoritative French dictionaries, Frédéric Godetroy's ten-volume *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française* (1880) and *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, agree in dating the earliest occurrence of "tribade" in French to bk. 1, chap. 13 of Henri Estienne's treatise, *Introduction au traité de la conformité des merveilles anciennes avec les modernes ou traité préparatif à la lapologie pour Hérodote*, published in Geneva in 1566 (see Elizabeth Susan Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999], 23, and 238n. 3).

10. See Valerie Traub, "The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7, no. 2 (2001): 245-63, esp. 249: "Representations of female-female desire during this period depend heavily on classical antecedents for their modes of comprehension. It is through, quite literally, a rebirth of classical idioms, rhetorics, tropes, and illustrative examples that female homoeroticism gained intelligibility in early modern England. By renovating the discourses of the ancients, writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries attempted to legitimize