

# Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### THE WESTERN ROOTS OF MODERN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

*Same-Sex Desire and Love in GrecoRoman Antiquity and in the Classical Tradition of the West*, Edited by Beert C. Verstraete & Vernon Provençal. New York: Huntington Park Press, 2006, 491 pages. Cloth, \$69.95; Paper, \$49.95.

Reviewed by Vern L. Bullough, Ph.D. (Deceased), 3304 West Sierra Drive, Westlake Village, CA, 91362; e-mail: vbullough@csun.edu.

In 14 chapters, this edited volume summarizes and expands scholarship about same-sex desire, primarily in the classic period, but some essays focus on later periods. It could become the definitive work on this topic. The study of such relationships has been a long and somewhat difficult journey, in large part because of inhibitions of scholars and censorship by society.

The heroes of Greek society during its period of greatest intellectual glory were men who exercised nude together in gymnasia and dined and drank without women present. The art produced during this period was dominated by the male nude, usually idealized and even sensualized. Same-sex relationships were an important part of Greek society. In spite of this, from the Renaissance on, Greek literature became the cornerstone of classical education, particularly in England and Germany (less so in Italy and France where Roman influence seemed to be more important).

Although same-sex relationships were difficult to ignore, most writers about the period managed to do so. As more investigative studies began in 18<sup>th</sup> century German-speaking areas, the first serious study of the topic by Glukas Himeros appeared in 1767. His book was in Latin, although it had quotations from the Greeks embedded throughout. This rather devious practice kept information

about same-sex relationships confined to a few dedicated readers. Only gradually did information about same-sex relationships begin to spread. Particularly important in this regard was the serious study, again in German-speaking areas, of Greek statuary, vase painting, and other art work where homoerotic themes were common.

German scholarship on homosexuality was picked up gradually by the English and others. As the Greek works were translated into English, themes dealing with same-sex love were often left untranslated so that even though the full story might be known by the scholar, public information on same-sex relationships remained limited. Still, in Germany, gay scholars attempted to publicize the existence of same-sex relationships during that earlier period. For example, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895), who began the agitation to make homosexuality legal, used a number of classical sources to back up his claim for the legitimacy of same-sex love. Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) went further by encouraging research in his journal devoted to the study of homosexuality as well as in his monumental work on *Homosexuality of Men and Women* (1914). Picking up from the German studies was the English defender of homosexuality, John Addington Symonds, who privately and cautiously published 10 copies of his *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. Other bootleg copies were published without his name attached. Still, when popular translations of Greek classics were published in English (such as by the Loeb library) passages dealing with homosexuality were usually censored. If not, such passages were translated into Latin so only scholars could be aware of the widespread existence of "Greek" love.

It was not until after World War II that serious study into the topic began in the English-speaking world. This current volume is the best example of such studies so far. The best way to illustrate the scope of current studies is to list the contributors and the title of their research articles: After a

brief introduction by the two editors, William Armstrong Percy III writes on "Reconsiderations About Greek Homosexualities." This is followed by Thomas F. Scanlon, "The Dispersion of Pederasty and the Athletic Revolution in Sixth Century B.C. Greece;" Vernon Provencal, "*Glukus Himeros*: Pederastic Influence on the Myth of Ganymede"; Thomas Hubbard, "Pindar's *Tenth Olympian* and Athlete-Trainer Pederasty"; Charles Hupperts, "Boeotian Swine: Homosexuality in Boeotia," and Anne L. Linck, "Sleeping in the Bosom of a Tender Companion: Homoerotic Attachments in Sappho." Carrying through the discussion of same sex relationships beyond Greece is James L. Butricia, "Some Myths and Anomalies in the Study of Roman Sexuality"; John R. Clarke, "Representations of Cinaedus [an adult male who liked to be penetrated by another male] in Roman Art"; Beert C. Verstraete, "The Versatility of Tibulus' Marathus Elegies"; Armando Maggi, "On Kissing and Sighting: Renaissance Homoerotic Love"; Wayne R. Dynes, "How German Classical Philology Engendered Gay Scholarship"; John Lauritsen, "Hellenism and Homoeroticism in Shelly and His Circle"; D. H. Mader, "The Greek Mirror: The Uranians and Their Use of Greece," and Amy Richlin, "Eros Underground: Greece and Rome in Gay Print Culture."

Although the articles in this collection presuppose some historical background, the ordinary reader who is interested could certainly get the main points of each article. For anyone interested in the development of same-sex relationships in Western civilization, this would be a good place to begin. The book is heavily footnoted, has an index of names and terms, a table of abbreviations, a general index, and what is called an *index locorum* (an index of classical sources).

#### REFERENCES

- Hirschfeld, M. (1914, 2000). *The Homosexuality of men and women*, translated by Michael Lombardi-Nash, introduction by Vern L. Bullough. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Ulrichs, K. H. (1864-1880, 1994). *The Riddle of "Man-manly Love,"* translated by Michael Lombardi-Nash, introduction by Vern L. Bullough. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.

#### STUDENTS GO TO "SEX CAMP" AND WRITE BACK LOVE LETTERS

*Sex Camp*, By Brian McNaught. Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2005, 446 Pages. Cloth, \$31.50; Paper, \$21.75; Electronic, \$5.95.

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As a professor, I feel as if I've done something right when the overwhelming majority of my 500 graduate and undergraduate students read an assigned book and write comments such as "It's amazing. I've gone through four years of college and the most beneficial book I've read

came in the final weeks of my college career." And "*Sex Camp* was absolutely amazing. I have never been so emotionally involved in a book. In every chapter, I was compelled to read on, excited to see what valuable lesson I would take away with me. I found myself drastically changing from laughter to tears from chapter to chapter. I believe that everyone needs to read this book to fully understand who you are and what you're about, because it certainly gave me insight as to who I was."

As expected, many students complained initially about the length of the book (446 pages), but when they turned in their evaluations, they literally gushed over all that they had learned about gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, transsexuals and transgender individuals, the impact being HIV-positive has on one's sexuality, the means with which people with disabilities experience sexual pleasure, the components of and obstacles to sexual health, masturbation, body image, and the full spectrum of sexual response.

*Sex Camp* is the fictionalized account of the Annual Workshop on Sexuality at Thornfield, an actual weeklong SAR that was held at an Episcopal Church retreat facility for 30 years, and led by some of the top names in the field, including Bill Stayton, Pam Wilson, Alison Deming, Dick Cross, Carol Dopp, and the author, Brian McNaught. (I spent more than one week in July over the years as part of the program.) McNaught created 32 fictional characters as participants, and the telling of their lives draws in readers and educates them about their own sexuality.

I used *Sex Camp* as an adjunct to a textbook and was delighted with the effect. McNaught's success at character development through inter-participant dialogue provided just the right balance of narrative intrigue and information for a generation hooked on reality programming.

I recommend *Sex Camp* for use in other sexuality education programs and to anyone of any age, gender, or orientation who wants to laugh and cry as they learn more about the multiple facets of human sexuality.

#### COMPLEXITY OF SEXUALITY: SHIFTING TO A FOCUS ON SEXUALITY IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

*The Handbook of Sexuality in Close Relationships*, Edited by John H. Harvey, Amy Wenzel, & Susan Sprecher. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004, 668 pages. Cloth, \$125.00; Paper \$65.00.

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This book is an update of the pioneering edited book titled *Sexuality in Close Relationships* (McKinney & Sprecher, 1991) that shifted the focus in sexuality research and sex therapy from the predominant individual approach to a more close relationship approach. *The Handbook of Sexuality in Close Relationships* will likely be one of the most helpful and scholarly books on sexuality to be published during this decade.

The list of chapter authors is impressive, and each one of them is on top of their research area. This exceptional book is full of interesting studies and research ideas, and it shifts the focus in sexuality away from the dominant individual perspective to explore how sexuality is influenced by the dyad and other contextual factors.

The editors and authors address many key conceptual issues throughout the book, including (a) definitions of sexuality, (b) the challenge of constructing dyadic and interactional models of sexuality rather than individual-level models, (c) complexity of sexuality in close relationships, (d) the impact of gender and the issue of whether distinct models of sexuality are needed for males and females, (e) the necessity to integrate race and ethnicity into theoretical models and sexuality research, (f) the importance of taking a developmental approach to individual sexuality and couple sexuality relationships, (g) the need for multiple levels of analysis of the phenomena of sexuality in close relationships, (h) a call for improved research on all aspects of sexuality and especially sex research in close relationships, (i) the need to move away from gender dichotomies to sociosexuality, and (j) the need to examine religions impact on sexuality in close relationships.

The handbook is organized into six major parts: Part I, Introduction; Part II, Role of Sexuality in the Formation, Development, and Maintenance of Close Relationships; Part III, The Dark Side of Sex; Part IV, Sexuality in Special Types of Couples and Contexts; Part V, Applications and Clinical Aspects; and Part VI, Commentaries.

As a reader of most of the better books on sexuality published over the past three decades, I found that *The Handbook of Sexuality in Close Relationships* triggered a shift in how I teach sexuality, think about sexuality research and sex therapy, and work with couples. In teaching sexuality, I now give more attention to sexuality in close relationships and less attention to individual sexuality. Now when directing graduate students' research, I encourage more focus on the dyadic context of the research. Finally, in conducting sex therapy, I now pay even more attention to the dynamics of sociosexuality in close relationships and less attention to sex problems.

Much of the past research on sexuality has come from an individual, behavioral approach, yet most sexual expression is interpersonal and cognitive; thus the need for viewing sexuality systemically in close relationships. This perspective opens the view to examining the meanings of sexuality more closely. DeLamater and Hyde (Chapter 1) provide an excellent brief overview of theories of sexuality. The theoretical lens through which sexuality is viewed determines what is observed and how it is interpreted. Michael Wiederman (Chapter 2) provides a much-needed critique of the research literature and makes numerous recommendations for improving research in sexuality, especially the research methodology and statistical analyses. His chapter is a concise combination of research method-

ology and statistics and points to the importance of the two complementing each other. Many practitioners lacking grounding in research methodology and statistics will find an excellent explanation of the two areas that is very understandable.

The chapters focused on sociosexuality, romance, sexual attraction, communicative framing, romantic beliefs, attachment issues, dispositional tendencies, and mating/dating behaviors stretch the reader's mind as to possibilities for future research. The chapters that are theory-focused provide a rich introduction to how theory drives much of research and influences what is interpreted (and how it is interpreted). Sprecher and Cate's chapter reveals some of the challenges in measuring and determining sexual satisfaction, sexual expression, and relationship determinants. Throughout these chapters, the reader finds challenges to conduct more qualitative research to explore the meanings couples place on sex, love, commitment, jealousy, and close relationships.

The chapters on sexuality in special types of couples and contexts focus on the relationship aspects of these couples and the context in which their sexuality occurs. Often, quantitative data on frequency and behavioral aspects of couples' sexuality are reported, but researchers fail to explore what actually goes on in couples' bedrooms. Every bedroom could be different in ways that change the *meanings* of the quantitative data. Too often sex research has not explored the special purposes and meanings each couple gives to their sexuality. Most likely, sexuality among young people is strongly influenced by their respective families of origin. Families provide the first impressions about love, appropriate behaviors, and the meanings attached to sex, yet families are often overlooked in sexuality research. Every couple and family is a special context—a complex mix of ethnicity, culture, religion, belief systems, roles, and more that develops its own sexual meanings and behaviors. All of these constitute the context of sexuality.

The chapter addressing sexuality in midlife and later life reminds the reader that we have much to study and learn to expand our understanding of the sexual lives of older persons. This understudied population is rapidly increasing in size, underscoring the importance of empirical investigation of sexuality among elders.

Chapter 19 is a stimulating examination of the differing sexual realities of "his" relationship and "her" relationship. This chapter highlights systemic interactions of a couple and their influence on sexuality.

The chapters that address the clinical aspects of sexuality in close relationships are written by premier sex therapists and sexual health educators. Each chapter provides a useful overview of the state of the art and the best of the science of sex therapy, exploring sexual pathology and sexual health.

The final commentaries are thought-provoking and are written by some of the best thinkers in the field. They are a fitting conclusion to this outstanding handbook. Every chap-

ter in *The Handbook of Sexuality in Close Relationships* is a good compendium of the current state of research and offers vital direction for future research. This book belongs in every university library and on the shelf of every sexuality educator, therapist, and counselor, as well as all others who

work with people who are involved in close relationships.

#### REFERENCE

- McKinney, K. & Sprecher, S. (Eds.). (1991). *Sexuality in close relationships*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.