

BOOK REVIEW

Ancient Rome & the Construction of Modern Homosexual Identities. By JENNIFER INGLEHEART. Oxford, 2015. Pp. xvii + 358. Hardcover, \$120.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-968972-9.

In her fascinating book on a topic in need of scholarly inquiry, *Ancient Rome & the Construction of Modern Homosexual Identities*, Jennifer Ingleheart has edited a collection of essays providing a classical angle to the burgeoning field of Sexuality Studies. Divided into fifteen chapters, the book seeks to explain persistent questions in the reception of sexualities: why has Greece held a pride of place in modern, Western discourses of homosexuality? What role did Roman sexuality play in such discussions?

The explorations in this edition suggest solutions to these questions, including a widespread cultural stereotyping in the Victorian Age of Rome as the center of licentiousness. Moreover, these essays also analyze the multiple manners in which Rome was written out of the history of homosexuality due to its perceived corrupted nature and written into modern discursive practices due to its malleability. To trace the reception of such Roman homosexuality and to help further delineate it from Greek homosexuality, Ingleheart coins the term 'Romosexuality'. The fifteen chapters of the volume cover various aspects of Romosexuality and are broken generally into three overarching sections: (1) Romosexuality in literature from the Renaissance to the modern period; (2) Romosexuality in the Visual Arts; and (3) two case studies on the Romosexual poetry of Catullus and Martial.

In the first section of the work, the essays focus on the reception of Romosexuality in literature from the English Renaissance to modernity. Through comparisons of the manners in which Romosexuality was employed by authors ranging from Karl Heinrich Ulrichs to Steven Saylor, this section demonstrates well how Romosexuality was marshalled to discuss discourses of masculinity and femininity, to outline the bounds of licet and illicit sexual activities, and to create the foundations of counternormative communities. For example, in Chapter Five, Funke and Langlands turn to the use of Rome by nineteenth-century English sexological writings, particularly those on male homosexuality. Focusing mainly

on the work of Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, the authors argue that, due to the restrictive cultural significance played by Classical Greece in the contemporary discourse on male homosexuality, Ellis and Symonds turn more frequently to ancient Rome, which largely was absent from such discourses, as a “crucial site that allowed sexological writers to negotiate different ideas concerning the origins and causes of same-sex desire and to map out new strategies of writing about homosexuality” (125).

In the second section, the reception of Romosexuality in the visual arts is considered, with chapters on Pompeian Art, the Warren Cup, modern displaying of ancient erotic pieces, and Romosexuality in modern cinema. As with the section focusing on literary evidence, this second section also looks to the multiplicity of ways in which Romosexuality was used to delineate lines of sexual discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, in Chapter Ten, Levin-Richardson uses Eduard von Mayer’s *Pompeii as an Art City* to explore the contributions that Pompeii made to contemporary discussions of male homoeroticism in twentieth century Germany. In particular, Levin-Richardson points out that von Mayer uses depictions of Romosexual eroticism in everyday art in Pompeii to show that homosexuality was embedded in everyday Roman life and to assert that Germany take its cue from them and revive the enlightened homoerotic values of the classical past.

In the epilogue, chapters by Hexter and Williams combine to provide a fascinating look into the reception of two Romosexual authors in particular, Catullus and Martial. Each author turns his attention to the methods in which modern commentators handled the erotically charged poems in both corpora. In general, Romosexuality in both Martial and Catullus were subjected to a similar fate: the censorship of homoerotic verses and the privileging of the heterosexual. In Catullus’ case, the homoerotic poems in his *Juventius* cycle were often dismissed as bad poetry or negligible because they “fail to conform to the pattern” of Greek pederasty (279). On the other hand, poems dealing with heterosexual eroticism were neither redacted nor summarily dismissed.

The case of Martial is quite similar, as it is pointed out that the manners in which commentators handled the homoerotic poems of Martial—expurgation, censorship, etc.—results in a distorted vision of Roman homosexuality, a vision placed alongside a seemingly unfettered acceptance of graphic heterosexual acts.

Taken together, these commentaries say more about the time in which they were written than they do about the poems they analyze.

As a whole, this collection stands a ground-breaking and invaluable achievement in sexuality studies. By turning our attention from the reception of ancient Greek sexual discourses, about which countless tomes have been written, towards the reception of Romosexuality, Ingleheart has set the groundwork for subsequent studies. Indeed, this volume achieves— and surpasses— its stated goal and is well worth scholarly attention.

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