

# THE MAKING OF MALE SAME-SEX IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL DISCOURSES<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*A debate on homosexual or gay relations which in some way or the other refers to Biblical discourses must recognise how early Christian sexual practices were embedded in Graeco-Roman constructions of male same-sex. In continuity with a constructivist approach, it is argued that the 'homosexuality' which the 21<sup>st</sup> inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century cannot be equated with the constructions of male same-sex relations in the Graeco-Roman world. Despite of modifications sex in the Graeco-Roman world was constituted and determined by a phallic configuration, making the penetrating phallus primary signifier of cultural privilege. The phallic configuration was generated and maintained by the interaction of the principles of hierarchy, competition and balance, which allowed for differentiation in the valorization of power in sexual relationships.*

**Keywords:** Homosexuality, Heterosexuality, Graeco-Roman lovemaking, Same-sex relations, Same-sex desire, Male same-sex relations, Phallocraticism, Sex and hierarchy, Sex and control, Paederasty, Kinaidos

## Introduction

In this article I argue that the difference between the regulative ideal normalising 'sex' in antiquity differed to such a degree from the regulative mechanisms normalising 'sex' in a contemporary setting, that a reclaiming cannot but be damaging. As a matter of fact, a 'return' is virtually impossible because a construction of what is 'natural' to us, differs fundamentally from a construction of what the ancients regarded as 'natural.' Although the Biblical writings themselves and its (rather vague) references to same-sex desire will not be the focus of this article, the social, generative principles and the practices of antiquity do not merely serve as background for Biblical discourses, but functioned in the production of Biblical discourses. To put it the other way round, Biblical discourse should not be read as distinct from the discursive practices of antiquity but inextricably part of its world. The primary objective of the article is to show that 'sex' is a cultural construct with a regulatory productive force – it is a productive force which governs and regulates the bodies it produces.<sup>2</sup> More specifically the enquiry is to study the way in which same-sex desire was constructed and regulated and to argue that by the time the Biblical writings were produced, the social principles and practices of antiquity were assumed and appropriated as 'natural' also in early Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The implied argument, applicable to the South African promul-

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<sup>2</sup> Judith Butler's approach (see specifically 1993, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive limits of 'Sex'*) plays a significant role in the theoretical point of departure of this enquiry.

<sup>3</sup> Although the historian, requiring more attention paid to the diversity in the ancient world, may sometimes be a bit frustrated, the objective was to capture those practices that have developed over centuries and have, by

gation of the Gay Marriages Act debate, concerns the notion of 'difference' in cultural construction. 'Sex,' as part of a regulatory practice in antiquity, as a regulatory norm, producing the bodies it governed,<sup>4</sup> produced bodies quite different from those materialised in a regulatory environment infused with terminologies concerned with 'equality', 'rights', equality of rights' and 'bodily integrity or dignity.' To put it differently: if Biblical writings are contextualised and seen as performative utterances and as the effect of discursive power in antiquity, it cannot solve contemporary problems but should be seen as part of the problem. However, every historical enquiry is at the same time also an act of appropriation, and while a normative position need not at all enter the scene, the objective is also to problematise the naturalness with which claims on 'naturalness' in contemporary society are made. The deconstruction of a 'naturalness' position is at the same time an attempt to provide imaginary material, 'props' for the staging of alterity performance, of pointing to a scene of 'queerness' which may open the possibility of resistance to current relations of power, operative in the regulation of sexed unions.

### **Making Sexualities**

Sex is not rooted in nature - although we experience physical desires, have and make sex, feel pleasure, orgasm, sex is the effect of a political technology of the body. We experience sexual desire as a force; when sexual desire takes hold of the body, we experience its materiality so powerfully that it obliterates spatio-temporal reality (Leder 1990, 68-92). And yet, this powerful materiality, experienced as a besiege of the body, can be seen as a power which has acquired its materiality via the repeated instantiation of socially regulative ideals; sex is 'mattered,' given its materiality by the infusion of social signification into the body and its actions. Sex therefore never exists on its own, but must always be seen in a context (Knust 2006, 1). Not only does it respond to cultural requirements, but that response is in it is in itself also a performance of culture. It is not only product of power, but is also at the same time a regulative power. Although it is one of the most intimate forms of bodily interaction, it is at the same time a cultural construct infused with a regulatory force. Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin (1990, 3) argue that sex does not exist independently, but forms part and parcel of several other social practices. For that reason they prefer to speak of a 'cultural poetics of desire' (1990, 4) which expresses configurations of social meaning and practices traversing the site of erotic experiences and regulating the formation of sexual identity. It is perhaps Butler who has made the strongest case up to now against the notion of any pre-discursive sex. According to her, sex is always part of a regulatory practice which produces the bodies it governs. As such it is productive and it is a power; its productive power defines, demarcates, differentiate, disciplines and draw boundaries (1993, 1).

The constructedness of 'sexuality', 'hetero-' and 'homosexuality' has now become common place. Foucault has argued and demonstrated that prior to the nineteenth century, 'homosexuality' did not exist. This does not mean that same-sex relations, same-sex desires and acts did not happen prior to the nineteenth century, but simply that it has not been casted into an almost disciplinary field for enquiry and control. The conceptualisations of 'sexuality' and 'heterosexuality' as conditions for the emergence of 'homosexuality' like-

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virtue of its frequent and repeated implementation, acquired the status of 'naturalness' or 'normalcy'. This objective responds to argumentation claiming 'naturalness,' the 'natural' or 'normalcy' and 'abnormalcy' as premises, in current debates on same-sex relations and gay marriages.

<sup>4</sup> The formulation is derived from Butler (1993, 1).

wise materialised only during the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Foucault (1978, 54) pioneered how sex was embedded into discourses, such as a 'biology of reproduction' and a 'medicine of sex' and how its amalgamated effect produced a *scientia sexualis*, concerned with establishing the truth of sex. Relentlessly prompted by the legacy of the confessional which continued its force into the fields of the paedagogical, the familial, medicine, psychiatry, even the jurisprudential, a technology of sex was produced (1978, 68), governing and controlling the 'sexuality' it produced. Infused by both the confessional and scientific discursivity, 'sexuality' becomes rooted in the natural. Its naturalness was derived from being a 'domain susceptible to pathological processes, and hence one calling for therapeutic or normalizing interventions; a field of meaning to decipher; the site of processes concealed by specific mechanisms' (1978, 68). It is not as if sex simply acquired a new or different interpretation during the nineteenth century. It was localised within the discourses concerned with the 'natural', infused with a scientificity and brought within the domain of truth, and as such developed into an epistemic site. Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin describe the 'sexuality' which materialises during this period as a 'tool' for the understanding, the placing and controlling of individuals (1990, 6).

What constituted the 'sexuality' of the nineteenth century? What was the difference with preceding eras and where did 'homosexuality' fit into the picture? Two aspects should be considered.

Firstly, sexuality became the constitutive principle of personhood. The 'self' was endowed with a sexual identity. The essence of a person was defined in sexual terms and was then given the status of naturalness. As such a deepseated sexual nature pervaded personhood in its entirety, not only constituting bodily structure, and posture, but also personality, behaviour and social interaction. For that very reason, a person was described in terms of *sexual orientation* (see Halperin 1990b, 24-26), and Foucault tells us that 'the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life... Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality (1978, 43). Whereas prior to the nineteenth century it would have been possible to see sexual acts deriving from same-sex relations as separate, forbidden and therefore criminalised acts, the nineteenth century constructed a person who could be intrinsically homosexual with the implication that nothing concerning this person escapes his/her sexual identity, whether that be birth, descent, behaviour, even morality.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, a sexual taxonomy, consisting of 'homo-' and 'heterosexuals' came into being, individuating human beings into a valorised dichotomy. Human beings were given an individual identity on the level of sexual preference, of sexual object-choice. Sexual preference, depending on the target of desire, determined the essence of your identity, whether you are a homosexual or a heterosexual. However, this dichotomous sexualisation of personhood was not equally valorized. A heteronormativity, eliciting one or the other 'natural' defect, casted the homosexual into an essentially deviant sphere. Foucault (1978, 118) refers to the 'degenerescence' theory which related what was regarded as perversions to a regressive evolutionary pattern. In some way or the other, the theory went, it would be pos-

<sup>5</sup> Halperin (1990b, 17,25) argues that 'sexuality' functions presuppositional for the conceptualisation of 'homo- and 'heterosexuality'. Although the latter term's origins can also be traced to the end of the nineteenth century, he regards it as a 'twentieth-century affair' (also 1990b, 159).

<sup>6</sup> An excellent example is the study by Dana Seitler (2004), who indicates that even a queer physiognomics has been produced via photography, coinciding with the medical pathologising of what was regarded as 'homosexuality' during the late nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century.

sible to find some or other physical or psychological defect in the genealogy of a homosexual or exhibitionist or any perversities (see also Seitler 2004).<sup>7</sup>

The notion of homosexuality was therefore coined in the nineteenth century; it was seen in opposition to heterosexuality and since heteronormativity was the criterion, it was seen as a deviant form of sexuality. Since sexuality was located with the natural, homo- and heterosexuality elevated to the objective status of naturalness, but with homosexuality as a condition, even a perversity, a criminalised act, that should and could be remedied. Finally, the essence of the 'self' was constituted by a sexuality which divided human individuals according to sexual preference.

If we concede that sexuality is a social construction, that pre-discursive 'sex' does not exist but that it is materialised via regulatory ideals or a regulatory body, then it is indeed impossible to relate the 'homosexuality' which originated during the nineteenth century with the same-sex relations of antiquity. Before we venture into antiquity, we first need to make a methodological remark. It is usually at this point that a distinction is made between 'gender' and 'sex,' in which the former is seen as the social formation or interpretation of the latter. 'Sex' may then be seen as natural, as factual, whereas 'gender' signifies the cultural. In exposing the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of sexuality, the argument then usually concedes that the anatomical differentiation between men and women in antiquity was completely subsumed, replaced and produced by its conceptions of gender. However, to do that will be to play into the hands of a kind of concealed, or conceded Essentialism which may assume a variety of moderated modifications, but nonetheless retain the possibility of a pre-discursive, natural status for sex. There is then also a very narrow crossing to the next step which retains a contemporary anatomy differentiating between 'men' and 'women,' which can then be differently interpreted according to current social systems of meaning. It is against this background that Winkler's plea for replacement makes sense. He points out that the contrast which is usually made between 'nature' and 'culture,' reflected *inter alia*, in the opposing of 'sex' and 'gender,' is in itself a construction of which the origins can be traced back to the 'sophistic enterprise of the fifth century B.C.E.' Through its consistent reiteration and added impetus during the Enlightenment, it has become, second nature in Western interpretation. For that reason he proposes: "For 'nature,' read 'culture'" (Winkler 1990:17). This does not entail ignoring the rhetorical use to which this differentiation has been put. Instead of following the customary route in classical historiography by snipping passages from philosophers constructing a history of ideas, Winkler advocates a 'history of social practices' in which the objective is to enquire into a 'competing variety of social practices' present within a particular moment in ancient history (1990, 18-20). Theoretically Butler (1993) takes us a little bit further, squaring up to the problem and radically pursuing our reality as discursive. Instead of the traditional dichotomies constructed between nature and culture, sex and gender, fiction and reality, Butler argues that the process by means of which matter is constructed should be taken into account. According to her "matter ... is a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter" (1993, 9). Instead of maintaining the dichotomy between 'sex' and 'gender,' as if sex would refer us to the natural whereas gender concerns the cultural, 'sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of ... reiteration. As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect...' (1993, 10). The possibilities of this resignification of the 'natural' versus 'cultural' dilemma should not be overlooked. On the one hand, it requires that the

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<sup>7</sup> Foucault (1978, 118) writes: 'The series composed of perversion-heredity-degenerescence formed the solid nucleus of the new technologies of sex.'

conditions by means of which sex is produced be taken into account. She aptly formulates the question: 'Through what regulatory norms is sex itself materialized?' On the other hand, if sex is the sedimented effect of reiterative practice, it opens the possibility for destabilisation, because each instance of reiteration could accommodate the potential of escape, of not completely conforming to the regulatory norm. It is in this context of sex as a sedimented effect of reiterative practice in time, regulated by regulatory norms materializing 'sex' as natural that we need to enquire into same-sex relations in antiquity.

### Phallocraticism in the Graeco-Roman World

The objective is not to provide a comprehensive enquiry of same-sex relations in antiquity, but rather a glimpse, a slice allowing us to observe the mechanisms at work in determining same-sex relations. For that reason the focus will be on same-sex relations as it manifested among the Greeks and the Romans. Furthermore, lovemaking between females undoubtedly also occurred in antiquity. It owes its exclusion in what follows from scant evidence, but primarily from the objective to determine what generated sexual relations in the Graeco-Roman world and how dominant sexual practices were enacted. Naming sexual relations has become extremely complex – the use of 'male same-sex' does not have the intention to exclude, but firstly to focus on a particular angle taken in this article and secondly to remind of the almost omnipotent regime of the phallus. However, even within the range of what could count as male same-sex relations unequal attention has been paid to all the various expressions, the objective being to enquire as to the constitutive or productive elements in the production of sexuality in the Graeco-Roman world.

### Sex as Hierarchic

The configuration of those regulatory principles investing their power in the materialization of sex in antiquity was complex. Their complexity resides in determining the mode of cooperation among practices generated by the principles of competition, hierarchy, balance, honour and shame, and balance. These principles cooperated in the variety of practices constituting sexual behaviour in antiquity. Although all of these principles were simultaneously at work in their generative function, the principle of hierarchy dominated.<sup>8</sup>

Sex in antiquity was determined by a rigidly, engendered social hierarchy in which the penetrating phallus functioned as the primary signifier of cultural privilege and power. The power of the phallus should not be equated with having a penis.<sup>9</sup> Although the possession of a penis would undoubtedly have given a favourable disposition towards phallic power (Foxhall 1998, 4,5), it was the penis embedded in a discourse of hierarchy, marked by reputation, ethnicity and correct genealogy, that rose to phallic power.<sup>10</sup> 'Sexing' did not take place according to anatomical difference, but was constituted by the power of the penetrating phallus.<sup>11</sup> Not only did each sexual contact signify a male engendered hierarchy, but it

<sup>8</sup> The scope of this article does not allow for an elaboration of each of these principles in the very practices they constructed. Only brief reference will therefore be made to their presence where applicable.

<sup>9</sup> Halperin (1990b, 164) also distinguishes between 'penis' and 'phallus'. Although the same referent is at stake, phallus, according to him 'betokens not a specific item of the male anatomy *simpliciter* but that same item *taken under the description* of a cultural signifier.'

<sup>10</sup> That social difference determined phallic power and control can be seen in the way in which the penis sometimes featured as object of ridicule. Unlike contemporary aspirations fuelled by sloganistic 'bigger is better,' size indeed counted in antiquity, but 'bigger' signified an inferior body, a body inclined to excess and uncontrollability (Bonfante 1989, 551; Stewart 1997, 67; Clark 1998, 21, 121-127).

<sup>11</sup> The quotation by Winkler (1990, 42) from Artemidorus provides a glimpse into the social configuration of phallic power. The phallus represents the household with all its various role players, such as parents, children,

also performed, or re-established that hierarchy. Although each cultural instantiation of phallic power might have allowed for modification, this was the measuring rod legitimating relationships, creating sexual roles, determining who was to desire and who was to experience pleasure, sanctioning particular sexual acts while frowning upon other, spatially relegating to separate spheres - relative to the penetrating phallus a morality in terms of degree is constructed, regarding certain sexual relations and certain sexual acts, more appropriate than others. Halperin (1990b, 30) argues that sex in Athens was not relational, but was radically oppositional; it should be seen as an experience which "effectively divides, classifies, and distributes its participants into distinct and radically opposed categories." The notion of 'oppositional' may evoke the possibility of equality, but Halperin continues that this oppositional should be seen in terms of hierarchy (1990b, 32). And this social hierarchy was not regarded as social, but as natural.

*Naturalising the dominance of the phallus*

For centuries the penetrating phallus was 'naturalised' via a variety of discourses, such as health, medicine, food, philosophy, mythology, literature, sculpture, vase-paintings, even the architecture, interior designs and decorations of houses and buildings. Reflection on the body, and its interaction with its environment, formed a constitutive factor in the making of the phallic configuration. Balance, harmony, symmetry, control, formed one of the generative principles making the sexed body. The male body was seen as the product of the correct mixture of bodily qualities and bodily fluids.<sup>12</sup> Both bodily qualities and fluids were subjected to an engendered valorization, with the result that the body of a woman was by nature seen to be defect, whereas the body of a man was by nature seen to be the criterion for naturalness. The incorporation of the bodily qualities derived from fundamental cosmological elements, such as heat, coldness, dryness and moistness, allocated more heat to males, less to females, more dryness to males, more coldness and moistness to females.<sup>13</sup> Whereas heat was the distinctive element making men, moistness was the distinctive feature of females.<sup>14</sup> However, whereas heat was positively valorized since it symbolized life, moistness signified an instability, a fluidity in conflict with desired social stability, rendering the female body in permanent condition of imperfection. Furthermore, the body exists in interaction with its environment and the 'outside' to the body may have a profound influence on the body and the symmetry of qualities and fluids constituting the body. However, although access to and exits from the body happen through channels, called *poroi*, in themselves engendered regulating mechanisms, the body of woman was seen to be penetrable, whereas man's was impenetrable. Although seen as a 'container', the body of woman was by virtue of both its moistness and its penetrability, regarded as fundamentally in a state of 'uncontainment'.

The logic of this naturalised phallic configuration was expanded. Since man was qualified by his heat, he was more active and since he was more active, he was seen as physi-

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wife in its ('the phallus') capacities of generation, cause and usefulness. Furthermore, it represents strength, reasons and education, surplus and possession, design, necessity and honour.

<sup>12</sup> Bodily fluids will here be left out of consideration, although the healthy body was seen to be the product of the correct measure and proportion of bodily fluids, and were just as in the case of bodily qualities, infused with an engendered valorization.

<sup>13</sup> See Hippocrates, *Nature of man*, Chadwick & Mann; Galen, *Mixtures* 1, Singer; *Best constitution of our bodies*, Singer.

<sup>14</sup> Whereas uncertainty sometimes existed concerning the temperature of women, whether they contained more heat than men or were colder, moistness was regarded as the distinctive feature of women (Dean-Jones 1994, 46). On the issue of comparable, engendered body temperatures, see also King 1998, 33.

cally stronger, harder, leaner. Since woman was qualified by her moistness, she was passive, incapable of controlling the flow of her fluidity, and since she was innately passive, she was softer, weaker and fleshy.

In every possible way the hierarchies of phallic power were naturalised. The principles of competition, of hierarchy, of balance, albeit an imbalanced balance, that functioned to construct an engendered social hierarchy of which the phallus was the primary cultural signifier, were naturalised in discourses concerned with reproduction. Although it was common place that women also produced sperm, their sperm was seen to be weaker and watery. Galen quite explicitly formulated that female seed was: scantier, colder, wetter and imperfect. Besides the fact that life-giving potencies were excluded for female seed, an embryology based on spermatic battles between stronger and weaker, between domination and succumbing, served to naturalise the socially engendered hierarchies that prevailed. According to the Hippocratic author of *The seed* and the *Nature of the child* if both partners produce a stronger sperm, a male child will be the result, but if both produce a weaker sperm, a female will be the result. If the quality of the sperm issued from each partner differ, in terms of stronger and weaker, the quantity will determine the outcome, which clarifies the possibilities of 'wimpish' boys and 'manly' girls (Hippocrates, *The Seed and the nature of the child* 6, Lonie; see Hanson 1992, 43). Hanson (1992, 43) refers to the same type of hierarchy produced by the Hippocratic author of *Regimen* 1. Although the most desirable babies are produced where there is no struggle because of same-seed production, engendered social hierarchies emerge again from the conflict between parental male- and female producing seed. When the father's male-producing seed conquers the mother's female producing seed, the result is a 'mannish boy' whose intelligence was inferior to that of the 'manly boy'; when the mother's male-producing seed defeated the father's female producing seed, a 'wimpish boy' was born; the conquest of the father's female producing seed over the mother's male producing seed produced a 'manlike' girl who was positively valorized, which was not the case when the mother's female-producing seed vanquished the father's male producing seed, allowing for the birth of the 'manly girl' (see Hanson 1992:43). Throughout the tractate sperm is graded into stronger and weaker, the stronger being male-producing, the weaker, female-producing seed; the stronger male-producing seed produces its formed foetus quicker (30 days) than the weaker female-producing seed (42 days). The engendered gradation into stronger and weaker derives its power from hierarchy of bodily qualities: the female-producing seed is weaker because it is more fluid and watery, whereas the male-producing seed is thicker, presupposing probably the presence of heat, but definitely the masculine quality of dryness. At the same time, the slower pace at which the female foetus is formed simultaneously 'genetically' signified and entrenched man's superior inclination to activity and woman's inferior inclination to passivity (see Hippocrates, *Nature of the Child* 18.31). Slowness and quickness, passivity and activity, are regulated by the principle of balance, because both the lochial discharge as well as the inflow of blood into the womb conform to proportion, differing in time relative to a female or male embryo. Even in pre-natal phase, naturalising the sexing of bodies did not distinguish into two distinct sexes, but classified in comparative terms, thereby creating a continuum where gender difference is valorized in terms of degree. Womanhood was seen as an inversion of manhood.

The radicality of Graeco-Roman phallogocentrism lies in a complete erasure of two distinct sexes - as a matter of fact, manhood acquires absolute status, it is a natural condition inclining toward the divine. Once woman has become 'defective male', an oppositional position has disappeared. Winkler (1990, 182) quotes Greenblatt (1986) who aptly formulates, "that for the ancient world the two sexes are not simply opposite but stands at poles of

a continuum which can be traversed.” Difference is here not in terms of opposition, but in terms of degree, from defective man to perfect man. On this continuum various levels of engendered hierarchy can be detected and a proportional distribution of bodily qualities always infuses these levels. For example: an engendered differentiation can be made between more manly and less manly women. A more manly woman would be of darker skin,<sup>15</sup> would be healthier but less capable of conception and maternity, whereas a lighter skinned woman would be seen as more feminine and prone to illness (Winkler 1990, 182). On the other end of the scale is a remark by Simonides in Xenophon’s *Hiero* 7.3 in which the ultimate status of manhood is depicted: “I myself think, Hiero, that a real man differs from the other animals in this striving for honor. Since, after all, all animals alike seem to take pleasure in food, drink, sleep, and sex. But ambition does not arise naturally either in animals without reason or in all human beings. Those in whom love of honor and praise arises by nature are the ones who already far surpass the brutes, and who are also believed to be no longer human beings merely, but real men”.<sup>16</sup> Not only is a radical hierarchy among the ranks of men signified by the ‘real’, differentiating between ‘real’ and ‘not so real’, but the constructed social order with the phallus as primary cultural signifier is here assumed as natural reality. No distinction can be made between socio-cultural and natural, no distinction is made between political ability and sex. A natural hierarchy, with almost perfect men entrusted with the governance of the *polis*, is assumed.

### **Male Same-sex Lovemaking in the Graeco-Roman World<sup>17</sup>**

#### *The ‘Normalcy’ of male to male lovemaking*

It is against the background of the omnipotence of the phallic configuration, ‘normalising’ sexual relations, that we need to look at same-sex relations in the Graeco-Roman world. Where the phallus was regarded as the primary signifier of privilege, status and power, where its constructed dominance effected the erasure of anatomical sexual difference, and where one sex became common to all, it stands to reason that same-sex relations could hardly have posed any problem. As a matter of fact, if the necessity of reproduction for the continued existence of the *polis* could have been excluded, it could have been seen as the preferred relationship because it could have focussed attention on the business of managing the *polis*, while still having the possibility of sexual relations. As such it occupied a privileged position in antiquity as its widespread and regular occurrence during all periods testify to.

This appears to be the case in Plato’s *Symposium* where the character Aristophanes gives a mythical account of how human eroticism originated (see Plato, *Symp* 189C-193D). According to Aristophanes human beings were originally doubled, globular beings and three engendered types existed, namely double men, double women and then the androgynes, who consisted of a mixture of male and female. However, because they were very powerful, they vied for power with gods. Consequently Zeus and the other gods decided that these globular doubled human beings be cut in half. Although this diminished their power, their love for each other was so frustrated and their yearning for the other half so

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<sup>15</sup> It is remarkable that on the extant wallpaintings in Pompey, women are almost always represented as lighter skinned, while men were painted as darker. This may also be to represent men as public and women as domesticated.

<sup>16</sup> In *On Tyranny*, 13. Translated by L. Strauss (1963). London: The Free Press of Glencoe.

<sup>17</sup> To speak of ‘same-sex’ relations in antiquity is probably a misnomer, since we know very little about what we today regard as ‘lesbianism’. Although there is very little evidence of women loving women, the practice may be assumed. In the light of phallocraticism’s dominance and the reign of the ‘one-sex’ model, it would probably be better to speak of ‘male same-sex’ relations (see also Boswell 1994, 57).



acute that they perished. So Zeus designed another plan, namely to move their genitals to the front and make it possible for them to have physical intercourse and reproduce. Aristophanes explains: "His object in making this change was twofold; if male coupled with female, children might be born and the race thus continued, but if male coupled with male, at any rate the desire for intercourse would be satisfied, and men set free from it to turn to other activities and to attend to the rest of the business of life". In his explanation, only an aside mentions the affection of women for each other and the objective is actually to indicate that where the two halves of women were united there was no interest in men. But where the two halves of males pursue each other, the origins of love for men can be traced to boyhood, and these boys are described as the 'best of their generation', the 'most manly'. Having a 'high spirit and manliness and virility', these are the boys who 'engage in public life' when they reach maturity. They have a 'natural disinclination to marriage and procreation' and it is only the 'compulsion of convention' which could force them into marriage (*Symp* 192A). Quite significantly scant attention is paid in this myth to those doubled human beings who were both man and woman: they are simply described as 'lovers of women' and then it is added 'most adulterers come from this class', and the women are depicted as 'mad about men and sexually promiscuous' (*Symp* 191D).<sup>18</sup>

What Plato's Aristophanes mythologised was common social practice in the Graeco-Roman world and it provides with a good example of phallocraticism's dominance and the way in which it dictated sexual behaviour. One should be cautious not to generalise as if common social practice assumed the same forms; neither should this speech be seen as pure representation of sexual practice, since it cannot even be said to be the viewpoint of Plato himself. However, it reflects a problematisation via a depiction of what is, according to the character Aristophanes, an ideal situation, operating on the very principles which produced the phallocraticism which governed lovemaking in the Greek world. Sexual relations are hierarchically engendered and phallic nature is here absolutised as qualitatively the best and durable, whereas other forms of lovemaking are downgraded. The epitome of love, the best expression of lovemaking, is portrayed as that between males. The productive force of love uniting men to each other, produces a more manly man, from which the *polis* may benefit, owing to the better quality of public performance (*Symp* 192A). This love is seen as more natural, since men are of the same kind, whereas the union between man and woman is seen as conventionally obligatory, as a duty to the *polis*. It is also hailed as qualitatively better than the love between man and woman; although it is clearly erotic, it can neither be restricted to mere physical desire nor to the desire for possession (*Symp* 192 C).

This speech demonstrates how widespread, common and often admired, the social practice of male to male lovemaking was in antiquity. Male to male lovemaking was not only restricted to the Greeks, but was part and parcel of everyday life in the Roman Empire as well. Besides very explicit examples, such as the male lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, Antinous,<sup>19</sup> and references in literary works, such as the *Satyricon* of Petronius, and

<sup>18</sup> Halperin (1990, 18-21) is correct in his criticism of Boswell that the myth did not reflect 'homosexuality' - the social practice of same-sex eroticism which is encountered in this myth is fuelled by a phallocraticism which does not function constitutively for contemporary same-sex relations; however, the myth should also not be interpreted from a democratic paradigm equally valorizing all types of sexual desire. According to Halperin 'one consequence of the myth is to make the sexual desire of every human being *formally identical* to that of every other'. This is, however, contradicted by the almost one-sided elaboration on male to male desire, with other object-choice desires treated as asides and qualified in slanderous context. What should be taken into consideration in the performance of this passage is the regulatory force of the phallic configuration.

<sup>19</sup> It would also be possible to refer to Caligula and Nero who had love affairs with men, although these could be seen as abusive.

characters featuring in the romance narratives, references to 'friendship' and to 'brotherhood' require an interpretation allowing for the possibility of an overlap with erotic relationships. Owing to the male-centredness of the phallic configuration constituting Roman culture, males were regarded as having the moral integrity, character and intelligence conditional to 'friendship' (Boswell 1994, 75).<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, friendship was often restricted to a single partner and of a more permanent relationship (1994, 76).

The 'normalcy' and 'naturalness' of male-sex lovemaking is further corroborated by images as they appear on vase-and wall-paintings, on ceramic ware, on cups, on ornaments, even sculptures, in short, the sheer quantity of material available from everyday life and the matter-of-factly literary treatment of male-sex relations are sufficient evidence illustrating to what extent this social practice was seen as normal and natural.<sup>21</sup> Clarke (1998) argues that the complete *corpus* of Roman literature allows for the construction of a phallic configuration, which included penis-insertive male lovemaking on condition that a hierarchic relationship be maintained. Besides reference to the literary *corpus* of Roman literature, he also provides with Arretine ceramic ware, such as pottery fragments, which have been mass produced in the city of Arretium during the Augustan era. The fragments, *inter alia* a moulding fragment, display explicit sexual activity, not only between males and females, but also between males. The male to male lovemaking appears to have been modelled on the male to female lovemaking, removing the female's breasts, breast band and adding a penis to the boy's body. The boy's pose assumes a full frontal position indicating that 'clear display was uppermost in the artist's mind' (1998, 77).

It is significant to note that these sexually explicit Arretine bowls and cups were mass produced during the Imperial period. Since they were affordable, their use were geographically widely distributed and fragments have been found as far away as London and Asia Minor (1998, 74-75). Their mass production and wide distribution indicate to what extent ancient society not only regarded explicit sexual activity, whether between male and female or between males, as acceptable, but indeed also as natural and enjoyable. Not only was the explicit display of the phallic configuration part and parcel of everyday life among the poorer classes, but the same type of portrayal can also be found on more expensive material such as silver vessels. As a matter of fact, Clarke argues that it was the explicit sexual activity portrayed on the expensive ware of the wealthier classes which trickled down to the lower classes.

### *The institution of paederasty*

The regulatory force of phallocraticism producing sex in Graeco-Roman societies juxtaposed, next to the various variations of sexual interaction between men and women, a type of same-sex sex maintaining phallic hierarchy. By far the most well represented form of same-sex relations was that of male love for boys. When a Greek aristocrat confessed to be

<sup>20</sup> The translational complexities should however not be underestimated. The terms designating siblings *frater* and *soror* were not only used in marital context, but referred also to homoerotic relationships. The same is valid for the term *amicus* which referred to friendship; however, although all friendships need not have been erotic, some definitely were despite its intimacy not being spelt out (Boswell 1994, 68-71).

<sup>21</sup> Yet Matthews (2000, 11) laments the 'little indisputable evidence for homosexual activity'. The question is to what extent contemporary interpretation, and specifically archaeological studies, is not still dominated by heteronormativity which assumes that gays dress differently (see the questions posed by Matthews 2000, 10, 13, 15), had different meeting places and not only used different sex toys, but also more frequently. Schultz (2006), for example, has indicated to what extent the misnomer 'heterosexuality' actually damages interpretation of Medieval material. The point is that the deconstruction of sexuality in antiquity requires different sets of questions to allow for the emergence of fresh material concerned with same-sex relations.

‘in love’ the target of his desire could have been either a woman or a boy, and his love for a boy would have been seen as completely normal and natural. Paederasty was institutionalised in Athens and was regarded as conventional. As a matter of fact, in some cases the love between an older male, usually called an ἔραστής, and a boy, called the ἐρώμενος or παιδικά, was on certain conditions, seen as a better expression of love than the love between a man and a woman.

The sexual relationship between adult male and adolescent boy was complex and it is extremely difficult to establish precisely how power was distributed. Furthermore, although paederasty was widespread, not only regionally, but also diachronically, stretching from the Greeks to the Romans, the modes in which it was practiced differed.

The main question is to determine the degree of power distribution and reciprocity between the ‘lover’ and the ‘beloved’. On the one hand, the variety of power differentiation we find within the institution of paederasty can be assigned to the intricate interplay of the principles of hierarchy, competition, balance with the concomitant assigning of honour or dishonour. The degree with which these principles cooperated in the constitution of paederastic relationships were not consistent, rendering more rigid hierarchic relationships in some cases with less reciprocity, whereas others, generated by a dominance of the competition principle may render more affective and reciprocal relationships. However, one should, on the other hand allow for the way in which dominant and subordinate discourses interact. The penetrating, phallic configuration occupied the dominant position, and its normativity functioned as conditional for the production of any other positions; however, its regulatory power was not uni-lateral and modifications, subversions and alternatives can at this stage be identified.

The regulation in terms of the phallic configuration required that ‘sex’ should be contextualised within the hierarchical order of the *polis* and its constitution reflected the political forces at work. The Athenian institution of paederasty was seen as a productive force in the formation of an honourable, virtuous, courageous and just social body. For that reason it makes sense to regard it as a rite of passage, an initiation into a construction of manliness where the phallic configuration dominated, reflecting two stages in the development of the freeborn, male Greek citizen.<sup>22</sup> Although paederasty may have been practiced outside the circle of the elite, it was an elitist practice, which made the continuity of Athenian ideals of masculinity possible. Assigned to Demosthenes, yet of unknown authorship, an ἔραστής, eulogises an ἐρώμενος called Epicrates in a speech entitled *Erôtikos*.<sup>23</sup> Socially cherished values feature prominently. Epicrates is described as courageous, diligent and intelligent, discrete and moderate, in pursuit of honour. He is praised as belonging to the circle of the ‘beautiful and the good,’ lauded for his pursuit of a particularly elitistic chariot race, called the apobates, which excluded everyone but the best. The suitor concludes that ‘the city needs the traditional *kaloi k’agathoi* -socially prominent men of high intellectual and moral standards’ (Roisman 2005:86).<sup>24</sup>

Although an aristocratic practice, paederasty was ironically also seen as criterion of democracy.<sup>25</sup> The origins of Athenian democracy were seen to have derived from a homoerotic relationship between Aristogeiton, who was seen as the ἔραστής and the noble and

<sup>22</sup> See in this respect also Hubbard (2002, 260n15, 263) on Pindar’s perspective.

<sup>23</sup> The example has been taken from Roisman, J 2006. *The Rhetoric of Manhood: Masculinity in the Attic orators*. For the specific references and further interpretation see Roisman 2006,85-87.

<sup>24</sup> The *kaloi k’agathoi* refers to the ‘beautiful and the good’ where ‘good’ suggests nobility.

<sup>25</sup> See in this respect also Kilmer (1997, 37) who indicates that homoerotic scenes did not disappear from vase-paintings after the demise of the tyrants, but only decreased in number in the decade after 470 B.C.E

wealthy Harmodius as the ἐρώμενος. Aristogeiton and Harmodius killed the tyrant Hippiarchos who was attracted to Harmodius but was rejected. Both of them were subsequently killed, but the event which happened in 514 B.C.E was seen as a liberation from the tyrants and as the dawn of democracy. Soon after 510 B.C.E two sets of statues were produced, first by Antenor but this was stolen from the Agora in 480 B.C.E by the Persians upon which the Athenians commissioned Kritios and Nesiotes to repeat the act. The production of these statues produced an idealised Athenian manhood, evoking not only an ideology of courage, loyalty, self-sacrifice and justice, but it also shifted the homoerotic union into the centre as a mechanism for the achievement and protection of freedom. The specific manner in which they stride forward, the way in which the striking arm is lifted, the bold beauty of their nude, muscled, male bodies were repeatedly enacted in other sculptures, but also in vasepaintings (see Stewart 1997, 70-75; also Yates 2005, 38). And the story of their love for each other functioned in the discourses of philosophers to portray the bond between males as mechanism for freedom and as protection against tyranny.

If paederastic practice can indeed be seen as political strategy, allowed and encouraged by the social body with the objective to ensure its own continuity and prosperity, the conditions of the phallic configuration would have applied, which means that the ἐραστής not only played the role of the active agent, but he also dominated the sexual act. On the other hand, according to the regulation of the phallic configuration, the ἐρώμενος would have had to assume a submissive, passive position; furthermore, it also posed the problem of penetration. If the ἐρώμενος consented to penetration, it would have suggested his willingness to be 'womanised', that is penetrable; if he refused to be penetrated, it would have meant resisting the social order. Yet consenting would also have meant to violate the social order, since the ἐρώμενος was the future equal of the ἐραστής. A phallic configuration, consisting and requiring a dominant agent penetrating a submissive recipient, posed a problem not only for the ancients, but also for some contemporary scholars who claimed a much greater degree of reciprocity in the lovemaking of ἐραστής and ἐρώμενος than the phallic configuration would allow (see for example Boswell 1994; Hubbard 2002). Although several voices have been raised against the omnipotent presence of a paederastic practice, consisting only of dominance versus submission, active versus passive and penetrator versus penetrating, the regulatory force of the penetrating phallic configuration cannot but have dominated the scene of paederasty. It was exactly by virtue of the principle of hierarchy that paederasty was applied. As a preparatory phase for Greek citizenship, it functioned to entrench and internalise an engendered hierarchic social order, in which a distinction was made between superior and 'developing-into-superior' male was made. It is quite significant that the first appearance of a sprouting beard should signal the approaching end of this phase, more or less at the age of 18, because this was taken to be a 'natural' indication of manhood's arrival. This was then the time when such a relationship had to end, since no free, adult male was supposed to submit to another and neither was a free, adult male supposed to dominate one of 'his kind'.<sup>26</sup> Threatening the allocation of roles, or reversing social roles, could in fact lead to a loss of citizenship for the adult male.

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<sup>26</sup> The 'age' criterion is very relative. See in this respect Boswell 1994, 57 who strangely acknowledges that the younger age and passive position were indeed part of the 'cultural myth' about what he calls 'homosexuality', yet somehow 'unhistorically' remarks that it is 'the business of historians to get beyond cultural facades'; see also Hubbard (2002, 259n12). The irony is that it is exactly the so-called 'cultural myth' or 'façade' then which relativised exact age, but nonetheless confirmed an age-differential, as can be evidenced by numerous vase-paintings, literary works, and even by sculptural skills, such as 'youthening.' Eighteen to twenty would be the *ad quem* of the privileged, aristocratic man male's schooling career; the termination of prepubescence

The relationship of dominance versus submissiveness which we encounter in paederastic practice, should not be seen in terms of servility, such as existed between the freeborn, adult Greek male and slaves, or even women. A few aspects should be taken into consideration as an attempt is made to understand the relation of power between ἐράστης and ἐρώμενος.

Firstly, paederastic practice flourished owing to the Athenian fascination with youth, especially the 'youthfulness of the 16-year old ephebe' (Bonfante 1989, 552). The nude body of the young boy, on the verge of entering into manhood, widely represented by the *kouroi* (young warriors) sculptures and from the sixth century also widely reflected on vase-paintings, became a symbol of beauty, the vigour of life, the promise of a future and a source of strength. It was the 'costume' with which the Athenian citizen adorned himself (Bonfante 1989, 552). If ever bodies were used as political strategies of power, the bodies of the *epheboi* (male adolescents) fulfilled this function. This becomes particularly clear in the youths portrayed on the Parthenon frieze. Stewart (1997, 75-82) observes that the males of the cavalry are shown with short hair, whereas they usually wore their hair long; only two of them are 'bearded', while all the others are depicted as unbearded youths, including the marshals, as well as the *apobatai* (warriors on chariots) and some of the attendants of the sacrificial animals (1997, 76). All of these features were the product of what was called 'youthening,' an artistic process by means of which expression is given to the Athenian idealisation of youth. The 'youthening' of the male figures on the Parthenon frieze functions as a strategy to elicit identification with the ideals of the *demos*. According to Stewart (1997, 80) the 'youthening' which was enacted on this frieze 'brought spectator and image into alignment with the ἐράστης-ἐρώμενος relationship that structured the average Athenian citizen's waking life'. The ἐρώμενος therefore functioned as a symbol of the polis, of citizen-love towards the polis, constructing a relationship of solidarity between the male citizens of Athens. The relationship of dominant ἐράστης versus submissive ἐρώμενος could not have been expressed in terms of an opposition, or an asymmetry, but rather in terms of degree; dominance in the paederastic relationship was not in terms of violence, abuse and aggression which so often typified the relationship with women and slaves.

Secondly, that the relationship between ἐράστης and ἐρώμενος should not be seen in terms of a 'hard' dominance versus submissive opposition but can also be seen in the venues which functioned as sources for paederasty. From both literary works, as well as archaeological evidence, paederastic relationships appear to have flourished in the contexts of the *symposia* and the *gymnasia*. The *symposion* was a male monopolized space: this was the place where they acted, talked, drank, feasted and dominated (see also Stewart 1997, 165). The women, who attended the *symposia*, were usually prostitutes, or *hetairai* (courtesans) and were subjected to sexual acts where outright dominance, and often violence, were the order of the day (Bonfante 1989, 559; Stewart 1997, 164-165). Shapiro (1992, 53) calls it the 'Athenian version of a stag party'. However, it also functioned as environment for the initiation of the young male into the world of the dominating phallus. Hubbard (2002, 263) describes the *symposium* as a homosocial site where male bonding took place and where values were 'imparted from one male age class to another.' A certain scale of ascendancy applied to attending boys. From sitting and listening to the male conversations, they rose to the serving of wine, then, at the age of eighteen to a position where they were allowed to recline on the couches with their ἐράστης and could be asked to perform with the lyre. Although their position was submissive, these occasions served as introduction, learning

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would probably have coincided rather with some bodily development, such as the onset of a beard (see in this respect also Boswell 1994, 57 and Hubbard 2002, 259n12).

areas, to the world of phallic control. It functioned as occasions where attitudes towards women, in particular the foreign woman, were installed through the often degrading sexual behaviour of the adult, freeborn Greek male;<sup>27</sup> it functioned as spaces where philosophic conversations could be conducted,<sup>28</sup> and it functioned as a space where the drinking of wine was monopolised by males (see Roisman 2005, 170-173).<sup>29</sup> The same applies to the *gymnasia* which can be seen as the controlled environment for males exercising in the nude. Although an environment which was seen as the roaming space for ἐράστης, it was also an institution which was closely supervised and regulated (2005:16), serving not only as spaces for the celebration of youthful male beauty, but also to initiate into the social order by means of exclusion (see also Hubbard 2002, 263-265). Exercising naked served in many instances as a ritual of initiation before allowing entry into the military world. Bonfante (1989, 554) indicates how the gymnasium “functioned as military institution, public banquet-hall, court, auditorium, country club, and university” and remarks that the athletic nudity which was found during the Classical period functioned as a dress of the “citizen who exercised in order to maintain himself in readiness for military service”. As a spatial source for paederasty it again points to a relative, non-oppositional attitude which would have prevailed between ἐράστης and ἐρώμενος, a relationship which would have been characterised more by its initiatory, educational nature, than by violence and aggression.

Thirdly, the phallic configuration, in which the penetrator assumes the dominant position, also determined the *modus* of the sexual act. Since the boy has not yet reached manhood, he assumes the position of passivity, whereas courting, sexual desire, act and pleasure are all the concerns of the active partner, the adult male. Two questions are pertinent, namely whether ‘boy love’ entailed penetration and to what extent was there any reciprocity in the sexual intercourse between ἐράστης and ἐρώμενος. Concerning the first: Although intercrural sex was initially seen as the dominant sexual act between adult male and boy, there is no reason to believe that anal sex was not just as popular. It was the immense influence of Dover (see Golden and Toohey 2003:6-7) which privileged paederatic intercrural sex. However, Dover based his observation on the depictions of same-sex intercourse on black-and-red-figure vases. Clarke has correctly indicated that these depictions, as artistic representation, cannot simply be equated with the historical act, and he has argued that several other reasons may have led to the specific mode of representation. For example: Representing the front of bodies allow for better representation of the male body’s manliness, as well as for facial expressions (Dover [1973] 2003, 121-123; Clarke 1998, 20). Clarke (1998, 36-37) also provides with examples of the preparation for anal sex between a man and a boy on a terra-cotta vessel fragment from Pergamon 2<sup>nd</sup> B.C.E, as well as a mould from Sardis, reflecting the same motif, also from the same period. The fact that cases occurred where penetration indeed took place between ἐράστης and ἐρώμενος should be an indication that the principle of hierarchy was still in operation, despite a softening of the dominance versus submissive axis, since penetration of the boy’s body shifted him to the domain of ‘woman’, the penetrable. Concerning the question whether a reciprocity in lovemaking between ἐράστης and ἐρώμενος could be established, Halperin (1990, 30) writes: “Sex, as it is constituted by this public, masculine discourse, is either act or im-

<sup>27</sup> See for example the masturbating boy in Figure 107, presented in Stewart 1997, 167; see also Hubbard (2002, 263) who suggests that the act of sexual denigration might have been part of the values imparted to youthful males.

<sup>28</sup> See for example Plato’s *Symposium* in which the *symposion* functions as the scene for a philosophic discussion on love.

<sup>29</sup> According to Roisman rules aligning the drinking of wine with the principle of moderation would also have applied at these *symposia*.

pact...: it is not knit up in web of mutuality, not something which one invariably has *with* someone". Within this configuration the possibility of complete objectification existed.<sup>30</sup> The axis, active adult male versus passive adolescent boy as part of the phallic configuration, also did not allow the boy to show interest, express sexual desire or give an indication of sexual pleasure. As a matter of fact, essential part of the submissive attitude was the downcast glance of the ἐρώμενος, and the 'up-and-down' hand positions of the ἐράστης, as he touches both the chin and the genitals of the beloved – these positions are clearly reflected in a vast number of vase-paintings. The sexual act could therefore assume whatever the active, adult male desired. And yet, in terms of the penetrating phallic configuration, the distant look, the downcasted glance, presented in vase-painting, represented the virtue of manliness, because the rather non-emotional, non-responsive stare or reaction suggested the manly virtues of moderation and self-control, thereby confirming that even in the act of lovemaking a man was in the making. The passivity which accompanied the submissiveness, should therefore be understood relative to paederastic practice as preparatory phase for adult manliness. To put it a bit differently: not only the principle of hierarchy, but also the principle of balance functioned in the making of paederasty.

Fourthly, the relationship of dominance versus submission in paederastic practice was determined not only by the principles of hierarchy and balance, but also by the competitive. Although the principle of hierarchy must be retained as dominant, it is the interplay between these principles which formed a paederastic practice allowing also for the expression of reciprocal affection. The principle of competition found its expression via the attraction an ἐρώμενος may have had for more suitors, or rival lovers, called ἀντεράσται (rival lovers).<sup>31</sup> Both from literature as well as from iconographical material the boy's power, embodied in his beauty, resided in the possibility of responding to a particular lover. Yates (2005, 35) writes that "[a] 'trophy' ἐρώμενος was rendered such by his socio-economic class, physical beauty and youth" and a certain degree of resistance would have been taken as evidence of his manliness. The acknowledged power which the ἐρώμενος had over the ἐράστης can be seen in the speech of Pausanias who argues that a lover may submit to the conduct of a slave in order to win the hand of the ἐρώμενος. Significantly such a conquest would be regarded as an 'honourable end' (Plato *Symp* 183B). While recognising the downcast vision of ἐρώμενοι in Attic vase painting and its suggestion of modesty (2002, 268), Hubbard refers to the wine cup paintings by Douris in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (2002, 273), and the kylixes by the Eretria painter, active during 440-415 B.C.E (2002, 277-280), to criticise the power-differential between adult males and boys. He points to the 'countervailing power of Beauty' (2002, 289) which was on the side of the boy. While this confirms Foucault's thesis that power never functions unilaterally, it still does not equalise the difference in the degree of power which existed between freeborn, Greek adult males and their beloved. As a matter of fact, a difference should methodologically be made between what was regarded as regulative and normative and alternative moments, just as a distinction should methodologically be made between dominant discursive power and marginalised discourses availing themselves of the discursive components of the dominant.

<sup>30</sup> Although it is impossible to deny the regulatory force of the penetrating phallic configuration, the complete objectification of ἐρώμενος has been disputed by several classicists. Kilmer (1997a:44-47) for example points to a black-figure Tyrrhenian amphora, produced circa 550-530 B.C.E where a non-bearded man anally penetrates a bearded, and also to a black-figure amphora of more or less the same time, painted by the Affecter, where a younger man appears to present a gift to his ἐράστης and where the usual difference in size between ἐράστης and ἐρώμενος has been reduced, albeit not completely. However, whether these two examples provide with sufficient evidence to relativise the mainstream pattern of homoerotic relationship is disputable.

<sup>31</sup> See for example, Plato (*Symp* 178E) for the possibility of more than one lover, although here called ἐράσται.

Although cracks were beginning to appear in 'Roman sex' as the sedimented effect of regulatory practices in ancient Mediterranean world, the penetrating phallus still remained the primary signifier of social power. The conditions producing phallic power remained the same, and although variations can be detected during especially the Imperial period, the 'other' was still subsumed by the omnipotence of the phallus, making sex in the mode of domination versus submission, requiring activeness for the penetrating phallus, passivity for the penetrated.<sup>32</sup> Veyne (1987, 204) writes: "To be active was to be a male, regardless of the sex of the passive partner", which continued the practice of paederasty. Among the elite it was customary to have a 'little boy or girl slave or foundling' and this pet child may have been used for sexual purposes (1987, 79).

And yet, the scenery is again not as uniform as one is sometimes led to believe. Although Romans would have had no problem with an older man loving a young boy, love-making to a freeborn, Roman boy would have been regarded as *stuprum* (a disgrace or shame). Paederasty as practiced by the Greeks, was treated with disdain by the Romans (Craig 1995, 520, 523-525, 531). Significantly the same conditions underlying the phallic configuration as operative in the Greek environment, also functioned in the Roman world. For the Romans it was dishonourable that a Roman freeborn young man assumed the passive position. To be a 'real man' meant to assume the active position in sexual intercourse, irrespective of the gender, whether male or female. Age as such did not matter, but what mattered was social status, whether the passive partner was freeborn or not – sexing is constituted according to social hierarchy, that is, 'free-born' as opposed to 'slave' where free-born counts for active, as slave for passive (Craig 1995, 533; also Clarke 1998, 84). Boswell (1994, 55) refers to a practice among Roman men of a particular status who had male concubines (*concupinoi*) which satisfied them sexually before they entered into marriage. However, such a concubine was usually a male slave. The institutionalised practice of paederasty, functioning as an initiatory mechanism into the elite club of ethnically superior males, packaging the male engendered values of phallocraticism, met with disapproval among the Romans.

In some cases evidence from pottery, such as the Arretine vessels, corroborate what we hear from Roman literature. In male to male sexual intercourse, the passive partner, penetrated from behind, wears long hair which would be an indication of his slave status; yet, Clarke also refers to the Warren cup where the partner in the passive role appears to have been equalised in terms of age, size, activity and hairstyle (1998, 86-87). Various interpretational possibilities are suggested with a conclusion that real-life representation need not be the only option, but that the possibility of sheer 'sexual fantasy' should be taken into account (1998, 89). What is significant is that these works of art, were not only among the wealthy and elite, but bowls and cups mass-manufactured in Arezzo during the Augustan period also reflect a more romantic and elevating act of lovemaking, specifically anal intercourse, between men (Clarke 1998, 78). Clarke (:78) writes: "Whereas representations of rear-entry penetration of boys and women by males on Greek vases emphasize male domination and power over his (unwilling) and often unattractive partner, these Roman depictions make *both* males as attractive as possible and show them mutually attracted to each other, even though in most cases one is a man and the other a boy".

<sup>32</sup> Craig (1995) convincingly argues against the notions of 'Greek love' as an umbrella term for all male same-sex love, or '*more Graeciae/more Graecorum*' (the Greek custom or the custom of the Greeks) as reference to specifically paederasty. He shows that as far as male same-sex love is concerned no deliberate continuity or deliberate appropriation (or rejection for that matter) of Greek customs can be illustrated, which means that except for the Hellenistic version of paederasty, male same-sex love was part and parcel of Roman culture.



*The kinaidos and pathicus*

Where the phallic configuration dominated it mattered very little whether male or female was penetrated; among the Greeks sexual intercourse with young freeborn boys was seen as a formative mechanism to the ultimate benefit of the *polis*; the Romans likewise had their version of paederasty on condition that the boy was not freeborn. These sexual practices operated from an engendered, valorized hierarchy making 'to act and to dominate' manly and 'to be passive and submissive' womanish. Since a 'biology' was designed and developed to provide and justify a phallic ideology of the body, to be a man, but to act womanish, was to act contrary to 'nature'. What was regarded as 'abnormal' was to have been born a freeborn man, yet desiring to be and act like a woman. Woman, we have seen, is not the opposite of man, but is defective man. Seen within a one-sex model, she is regarded as an internal threat for the identity of man (Winkler 1990, 182).

A freeborn man, desiring to be penetrated, being passive, was treated with disdain and was ridiculed, not because of sexual intercourse with another man, but because passivity and submission meant slipping into womanhood. And voluntary submitting to passivity meant to willingly lose what 'nature' has bestowed on him. Loss characterised the *kinaidos* and *pathicus*.<sup>33</sup> Stewart (1997, 11) writes concerning the *kinaidos*: "A man who likes being penetrated and is passive like a woman, he risks losing his citizen rights, the rights of the free, sovereign, active male." The radicality of loss within the cultural understanding of competition in Greece should be correctly understood. It is not simply a matter of the winner 'takes it all,' receiving awards and rewards, but also a matter of the loser 'loses it all,' since he is shamed, dishonoured and relegated to a position of inferiority and imperfection. Voluntary loss of what culture bestowed on a man, namely the right to be active and to be dominant, to penetrate and insert, was considered a disgrace and treated with sheer disgust. Since he has willingly given up his manhood, he entered the realm of the imperfect man, woman (see Winkler 1990:178). Such a man, who has willingly surrendered the principle of competition cannot be trusted with leadership in a community and is for that reason no longer allowed to speak in the Assembly. This is a man who does not want to control and master, but be controlled and mastered. Winkler (1990, 179) contrasts the *kinaidos* with the citizen-soldier, the hoplite who was responsible for the defence of the *oikos* and *polis* and who had to display his manliness and courage on the battlefield in face to face battle. The *kinaidos* as loser cannot be entrusted with the matters and the security of the *polis*.

Losing the role of the dominant, active player also meant losing the identity of a man. Male desire to be penetrated, surrendered to female desire, has the ripple-effect of a complete, anomalous inversion of identity. Since the *kinaidos* is 'consumed' by the feminine, his behaviour was characterised by uncontrollability, loss of self-control and moderation. Since the principles of hierarchy and competition were willingly surrendered to the feminine, the principle of balance was also violated. The insatiable lust of the *kinaidos* expressed by the desire for penetration extended also to excessiveness in acquiring luxuries, eating and drinking habits and in the inability to restrain the body through diet and exercise. Roisman (2005:89) writes: "Men who were driven by their appetites and wants and who spent lavishly to support them violated the masculine ideal of self-restraint; they more closely resembled the Athenian stereotype of women as consumers than that of men as producers" (see also Winkler's discussion of the case between Aeschines and Timarchos 1990, 188-190). Furthermore, being usurped by the sphere of the feminine, the body of the *kinaidos* loses its hardness, strength, agility and balance. Softness characterised his body and he

<sup>33</sup> Both these terms refer to the male subjected to uncontrollable lust, voluntarily submitting himself to the receptive position (see Clarke 1998, 84).

assumes female bodily characteristics. Winkler (1990, 200) quotes from Aristotle describing the *kinaidos* as a man with 'unsteady eye' (which can be seen as a sign of cowardice), as having 'knock-knees' (a feature assigned to female animals); he inclines his head to the right and he gestures with his palms up and wrists loose, and when he walks it is either by a swaying of hips or by attempting to keep them under control.

The *kinaidos* found his Roman partner in the *pathicus*. Although the words *cinaedus*, *pathicus*, and *pedicare* were Greek loanwords, there is no reason to think that the Romans followed in the wake of the Greeks in their stereotyping behaviour – they did their own stereotyping. However, the conditions constituting the phallic configuration in the Greek world also played their role in the world of the Romans. For that reason it was also the distinction between 'active' and 'passive' behaviour which differentiated between acceptable and *stuprum* sexual behaviour. Those freeborn Roman men, opting for the insertive or passive role were regarded as deviant, not because of their desire for men, but because of their appropriation of the female role, in sexual matters – they were seen as feminised (Craig 1995, 536).

### **Conclusion: Conditions for the Understanding of Male Same-sex Desire in Early Christianity**

There is no real reason why Biblical discourse should feature in deciding contemporary issues on sexual, in particular same-sex relations. However, Biblical discourse forms part and parcel of South African culture and irrespective of its legitimacy has played a role in the shaping of morality. If it is then incorporated into argumentation on same-sex relations, the conditions which produced Biblical discourse, in particular on same-sex, should be taken into account. Studies on 'homosexuality' and the Bible are inclined to string the embarrassingly few Biblical references together, then embed these utterances in wider literary contexts, such as Genesis 1 and 2, or even wider by referencing to written extra-Biblical material in the ancient world. This is not helpful because our sexuality pervades our entire existence and to attempt an understanding of its complexity we need to enquire the powerful forces by means of which sex is materialised. For that reason conversations on issues pertaining to same-sex relations require that the conditions which formed and shaped sex, in all its variety, in early Christianity should be taken into account.

Claims on what constitutes 'natural' sex have been part and parcel of Western culture for a long time. The advances of the Natural Sciences, especially the increasing status of Biology, have given added impetus to these claims. Moralists, so often (ab)using the AIDS pandemic, have likewise insisted the 'naturalness' of heterosexuality. Yet Winkler (1990:17) correctly proposed: "For 'Nature,' read 'Culture.'" For example: What contemporary society would have taken as paedophilia and what it has in fact criminalised, was institutionalised in the Greek world and seen as a stepping-stone to adulthood among those citizens laying the foundations of Western democracy. Furthermore, the construction of the phallic configuration almost erased anatomical difference, retaining the body of 'woman' as a somewhat moist, porous container for reproduction, but primarily constructing her as a defective, imperfect, weak and emotionally instable male, thereby bolstering male superiority. Her body was given a 'natural' inferiority and it became a criterion for the measurement of manliness. Claiming 'naturalness' is nothing but an engendered political strategy of power and should be deconstructed in debates concerned with same-sex relations.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> It is, of course, usually Romans 1:18-32, specifically 1:26-27, which evokes the claim of 'naturalness.' A favourite strategy of interpretations desiring to acquire a biblical position against 'homosexuality' is to interpret the preceding 1:18-23 as Creation Theology, thereby giving added impetus to the 'unnaturalness' of 'ho-

The unnaturalness of what is taken to be natural sex can also be seen in the diversity of constructions. What is taken to be natural, usually functions in a regulative manner. Even cultures as close as the Greeks and the Romans constructed in different ways – the generative principles were the same but what and how they structured practices differed as if not related. The right of an older man to have sex with a younger boy was legitimated, even encouraged by the phallic configuration; but where the Greeks opened the scope to include all boys, but even institutionalised this as a practice where it applied to freeborn, Greek boys, the Romans closed the ranks and excluded freeborn boys. On the one hand paederasty is seen as a productive force for the future benefit of the city; on the other hand paederasty is seen as a productive force to the future detriment of the Imperium. In neither of the two cultures was an older man penetrating a younger man regarded as a problem – it was completely acceptable with slaves, foreigners and conquered peoples; the dominance versus submissive axis regulated age and relationships with who were regarded as ‘others’; from the perspective of the Romans, the problem was a protection of the integrity of the freeborn’s status and position in the social order. However, the Greek would have argued the same, explaining that it was precisely paederasty opening possibilities for the freeborn, that it signified the boy’s entrance into the circle of elite men. In both cases the sex event is not only entrenched in powerful discursivity but it also points beyond itself. It functions as a productive force to establish a hierarchy of ethnicity; at the same time it is also a *produced* productive force and it was produced by the principle of hierarchy.

And yet despite the diversity of sexuality constructions, the discourses concerned with sexuality were in some way or the other the products of primarily the principle of hierarchy and in a secondary sense, the principle of competition. Although these two principles usually function in combination, the principle of competition functioned to soften the edges of a rigid, sometimes almost brutal hierarchy, expressed in terms of dominance and submission. Male same-sex in the Graeco-Roman world was determined by ‘who is on top.’<sup>35</sup> Boswell (1994), Cohen (1987 [2003]), and Hubbard (2002) with others, have argued against an oversimplified imposition of a dominance versus submission axis on male same-sex relations in the Graeco-Roman world, pointing to legal protection for Athenian boys, to the elevated position of male to male lovemaking with a bare minimum of age-differential, to the possibility of consent, albeit in different form, and to the possibility of permanent relationships between men. Despite their insistence on modification of the traditional classical paradigm of dominance/active versus submissive/passive, initiated by Dover, none have dismissed the dominance of hierarchy prevailing in male same-sex relations. What should be taken into account though, is how the principle of competition functioned within the dominance dictated by hierarchy – in male same-sex relations it was not always simply a matter of ‘armoured’ conquest, but rather of amorous conquest, allowing a certain measure of agency to the pursued!<sup>36</sup> It is exactly the dominance of the hierarchic principle with the dominance versus submissive lovemaking practices it produced which gives legitimacy to the claim that ‘homosexuality’ was not present in ancient society. Neither ‘homosexuality’ as defined by a nineteenth century paradigm, nor gay relationships based on consensuality and mutual desire can align with the male sex-relations generated by the principle of

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moisexuality’ – it was ‘from the beginning’ never meant to be according to this type of interpretation (see for example the highly oversimplified essay by Schmidt 1997, 93-104).

<sup>35</sup> The phrase is borrowed from Knust (2006, 1-13).

<sup>36</sup> The erotic epigrams translated and published by Daryl Hine (2001) provide numerous examples of the loving, flirtatious escapades between ἐράσται and ἐρώμενοι. And yet, despite the fact that these epigrams reveal to what extent lovemaking entails ‘two to tango,’ the perspective from which they were written consistently reflects the principle of hierarchy.

hierarchy. Sexual preference did not constitute identity, but a phallic configuration, determining status, using ethnicity and class constituted what a 'real' male was ... and what was mattered, was phallic privilege.<sup>37</sup> Knust (2006) writes: "[S]exual acts dramatized status distinctions, reenacting a 'natural' (i.e., entirely conventional hierarchy along the lines of active partner or passive partner, dominant or submissive.)"

Finally, 'making sex' functions powerfully in the production of boundaries, excluding by using deviancy as mechanism and including by the demonstration of conformity. In antiquity the construction of sex was most often used either to blame or to praise. On the one hand it was used to construct the virtuous identity, and the advocacy of a particular *ethnos* consistently hovered in the background. A 'real' man was a virtuous man, a 'real Roman' was a man, belonging to a freeborn, adult, ethnic group, who was in self-control and not prone to sexual excesses. Sexual self-control, restraint and moderation were indications of balance maintenance, one of the principal, generative principles in the Graeco-Roman world. On the other hand, sexual slander functioned as technique to expose who was or should be actually an 'outsider'. For that reason, Greeks constantly referred to Persians as a nation who cannot control themselves and were therefore seen as 'slavish'. In a similar manner, early Christians did not only constantly re-constitute themselves by pointing to the sexual enslavement of others, thereby affirming their identity, but also constructed the identity of others as sexually deprived and immoral. Sexual slander served to contaminate, castigate, mutilate a person or a group's character while it functioned at the same time to confirm the 'self's' moral and virtuous position. It stands to reason where the phallic configuration dominated, the taboos associated with male same-sex practices would have been used in vituperative fashion. For example: Greek pederasty was legitimate as long as there was no bribery involved; gifts were in order as can be seen in numerous vase-paintings, but sex in exchange for money was not allowed. To destroy a character was to associate an ἐράστης with the bribery of an ἐρώμενος. What it did was to violate the principle of competition and to relegate the ἐρώμενος to the sphere of prostitutes, thereby also violating the principle of hierarchy. In particular it was the figure and person of the *kinaidos* or *pathicus* who was evoked in the practice of sexual slander. Not only was the *kinaidos* or *pathicus* taken to be men whose sexual 'deviance' was seen as evidence of sexual excess, but their desire to betray or exchange their 'natural' manhood, went against the grain of social appropriateness. These were men, desiring to be 'defective men,' that is, women! To assign 'kinaiditic' characteristics to a man was therefore one of the most devastating techniques of vilification. It also enabled a complete butchering of such a person's character, because if a man was shown to be a *kinaidos* or *pathicus* an immoral totality transfer was bound to follow. Such a person, who was unable to control himself sexually, was to be distrusted because he was deceptive; not in control as far as his sexuality is concerned implied also uncontrollability as far as luxury, greed, gluttony, even speech is concerned. In short, every single defective feature associated with women, could then also be assigned to such a man.

The widespread use of sexual slander, in particular sexual slander making '*kinaidoi* or *pathicoi*' should be taken into account in the interpretation of early Christian material. For most early Christians male to male sexual relations would probably not have been regarded as a problem; as a matter of fact, those who were household owners, possessing slaves and

<sup>37</sup> The dominance of the dominant versus submissive axis should function as strategy of interpretation in any enquiry of early Christian writings, even when mention is made of 'equality.' Owing to the dominance of the hierarchic principle, and especially also the emphasis on a masculinity, determined by 'activeness', Paul's concern in Romans 1:26-27 is not 'homosexuality' but the problem of a male deserting his fate-designed role as active penetrator – it is quite significant that 'they' (referring here to the recipients) will 'receive in themselves the due penalty for their error' (1:27).

slave boys, would most probably have engaged in sexual encounters with either slaves or slave boys. More problematic, but useful as a technique of vilification, would have been the penetrated, passive partner in a homoerotic relationship, the *kinaidos* or *pathicus*.<sup>38</sup> It is significant that Paul refers to homoerotic relationships in Romans 1:26-27 firstly, in terms of uncontrollability. This is signified by the verb *paradidōmi* (to give up). Although God is subject, their excessive sexual behaviour, their sexual uncontrollability, signifies that they have been abandoned to licentiousness (Knust 2006, 66). Secondly, their sexual licentiousness and 'unnatural' sexual behaviour casts 'them' into the circle of the 'outsiders.' Paul's objective in Romans 1-4 is to establish and define the 'real' Jew, who he obviously identifies as the one who believes in the resurrected Christ; within the context of establishing identity, sexual slander is invoked to consolidate the in-group while ousting the 'other.' Thirdly, if Paul was indeed using sexual slander, showing the 'other's' uncontrollability, that is, making use of the *kinaidos* structure in his sexual invective, Paul's reference here is to the passive, penetrated partner. This is also confirmed by 1:26 where women's desertion of 'natural' sexual relations introduces the topic of homoerotic relationships as characteristic of the 'other'. That it is indeed the *kinaidos* structure which generated his vituperative rhetoric is confirmed by the vice list in 1:28-32.

The use of sexual slander to contaminate and destroy the person of the 'other' is yet another reason why extreme caution should be used in using ancient religious material as conversation partner in current debates, not only on same-sex relations, but on morality as such. It should be kept in mind that the sexual slander used in flagellating the opponent in the Graeco-Roman world, reflects not only the extreme of sexism in using the body of woman as the lowest denominator in the valorization of gender relationships but is at the same time tantamount to hate-speech in contemporary society.

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<sup>38</sup> Knust (2006:58-59; 194-195) shows that it was the passive penetrated partner who was a problem for Philo of Alexandria, as well as for the Palestinian rabbinic tradition.

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