

Since antiquity the culturally sanctified institution of paederasty has dominated all major discussions of same-sex erotic experience in ancient Greece and Rome. D. Halperin (1990; 2002, 115) declares that Greek “homosexuality” operated on a purely physical level, that paederasty was “sex as hierarchy, not mutuality, sex as something done to someone by someone else, not a common search for shared pleasure, or a purely personal, private experience [.]” This, at least, is the perspective offered by elite masculinist discourses on sexuality that survive in our primary sources. But as B. Brooten (1996) and A. Richlin (1993, 2006) have pointed out, ancient texts are skewed toward the perspective of elite male citizens who played the active role in sexual encounters. The voice of the *eromenos*, the prostitute, the penetrated has been lost or overlooked. Likewise, the dominance of Greek paederasty as a *normative model of behavior* tends to skew modern studies of ancient sexuality toward interpretations based on power and sex, or an almost neo-platonic celebration of emotional rapture between man and boy. I promote a new approach to ancient sexuality inspired by a central tenant of queer theory that defines as its subject the study of non-normative sexualities. Paederasty only becomes a queer subject from the perspective of modern heteronormativity; in its indigenous context the paederastic model represents a normative mode of behavior accepted and regulated by the dominant social paradigm and thus resists the label queer. I argue for a new scholarly focus on sexual behavior that does not conform to the normative models of paederasty or operates outside it, a topic that is surprisingly under-explored (excepting the work of John Winkler and A. Richlin). The search for queer voices from Greece and Rome is paramount (cf. Halperin 2002, 110). Accordingly I attempt to bring to light several first-person voices in the so-called *Musa Paedika* that belong to “sexual outsiders” who defy normative models of paederastic love and masculine identities, voices that problematize modern (and ancient) constructions of hierarchical paederasty. For example, Strato (12.211) contrasts his own feelings with the disinterested non-reciprocal sex demanded by a boy’s master: Strato explicitly tells the boy that he will play measure for measure as an equal (παίξεις ἴσα). In 12.13 and 238 the voyeuristic poet derives sensual pleasure from watching two or more youths engage in reciprocal sex, but Strato does not want to gratify himself at the boys’ expense, rather, he seems eager to join in the fun. Elsewhere, he stresses the importance of teaching boys how to masturbate in order to make their liaisons with more experienced men equally gratifying. Strato is interested in boys, not simply in fucking them. The very act of compiling a specialized collection of homoerotic epigram also suggests the emergence of a “sub-culture” defined in part by exclusive same-sex interests (cf. Richlin 1993). Several poems express an exclusive, and I believe *involuntary general* desire for members of the same sex that cannot be explained as mere preference (cf. Halperin 2002, 89f.) and is not defined by age-differentiated paederasty. The use of the adjectives ἄρσενες and ἄρσενικοῦ in 12.17 and 87 as opposed to the more common word παῖς or its derivatives suggests these authors were not interested exclusively in boys or paederasty *per se*; indeed, these anonymous voices represent an effort to articulate an inherent desire and emotional disposition that the authors themselves recognized as being different and existing outside the realm of normative sexual feelings. Accordingly, the proverb in 12.238 implies that a natural affinity exists between boys who take turns having sex with each other, and the fact that Strato and his friends often kept their pleasures a secret (12.231) indicates that such interests were not wholly condoned. Their voices seem to operate within an epistemology of the closet (Sedgwick 1990) meant to disguise their alternative sexualities within the normative discourses of paederasty (cf. Richlin 2006).