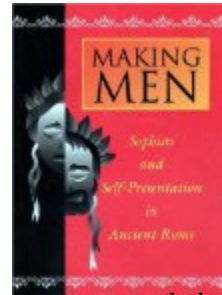


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Maud W. Gleason. *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995. xxxii + 193 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-04800-0.

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Every so often a book appears that breaks new ground in its discipline; *Making Men* is one example. Studies of sexuality and of gender in antiquity have become increasingly commonplace in recent years but until now the study of masculinity has been neglected. Gleason's book represents a start in redressing the balance, and will provide food for further thought and research in the immediate years to come.

As the title suggests, self-presentation and construction of manhood are explored through the sphere of sophistry, and in particular through the careers of Polemon of Laodicea and Favorinus of Arelate. The historical backdrop is the late Principate, a time which Gleason regards (somewhat against current thinking) as being in a Gibbonian-style decline. The malaise was, Gleason argues, manifested in the failure of elite *habitus* (= deportment) to equip its youngsters for public life. Elite acculturation through rhetoric, traditionally a means of separating the elite from the impostors, became a specific focus for this realisation, and entered the domain of conscious discourse.

Chapters 1 and 2 chart the rise to fame in this context of Favorinus and Polemon respectively. The skills of both are analysed through their best-known works, Favorinus's *Corinthian Oration*, and Polemon's *Physiognomonika*. The later is a deconstruction combining sophistry with Favorinus's physiognomic method. In this analysis, Favorinus and Polemon are bound together: Favorinus as the outsider-eunuch, but brilliant sophist-philosopher, whose attraction lay in both his sexual ambiguity and his self-fashioning through rhetorical, supposedly masculine methods; and Polemon, as the equally dazzling sophist, whose impact relied both on his own masculinity and his revelation of others'—particularly Favorinus's—sexuality.

The next chapter explores 'physiognomy and the semiotics of gender.' Gleason argues for deployment of facial scrutiny and bodily deportment to unmask gender and 'gender deviance.' Explored in detail here is the cultural construct of gender, and how masculinity could be achieved only through combining acculturation with anatomical sex. Femininity, detectable by the physiognomists through tell-tale facial and body movements, therefore betrayed both suspect men and noble impostors—for manliness was the mark of true nobility.

Chapter 4 considers, similarly, vocal exercise and the ways in which it could improve the (male) bodily condition. The voice, too, was considered gendered, but because it could be altered, could never be the primary diagnostic tool in this respect.

Chapter 5 looks at the voice as discussed by Greek and Roman rhetorical writers, a survey that effectively underlines Favorinus's transcendence of rhetorical stereotypes. This leads into the last chapter, where Gleason returns to the theme of constructing identity in a discussion of Favorinus's prose in his *On Exile*. Favorinus's success, she concludes, lay in the unique self-fashioning through rhetoric that his sexual ambiguity, ironically, permitted. Since he was 'entirely the product of art,' Favorinus was, paradoxically, more conventional than his apparently hyper-conventional rival.

Gleason's is a fascinating book, the intricate and careful arguments of which cannot be done proper justice here. It should place masculinity firmly on the agenda of ancient social history.

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