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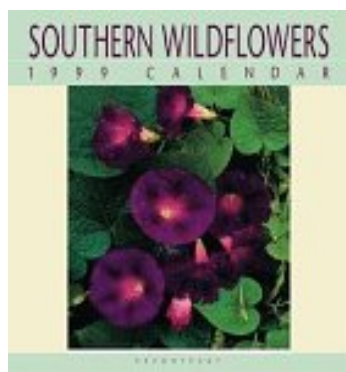
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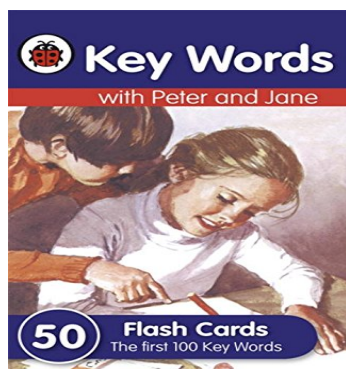
The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure

In this sequel to The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, the brilliantly original French thinker who died in 1984 gives an analysis of how the ancient Greeks perceived sexuality. Throughout The Uses of Pleasure Foucault analyzes an irresistible array of ancient Greek texts on eroticism as he tries to answer basic questions: How in the West did sexual experience become a moral issue? And why were other appetites of the body, such as hunger, and collective concerns, such as civic duty, not subjected to the numberless rules and regulations and judgments that have defined, if not confined, sexual behavior?

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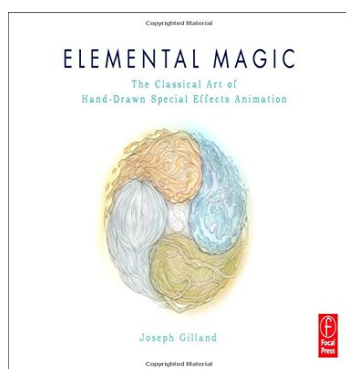


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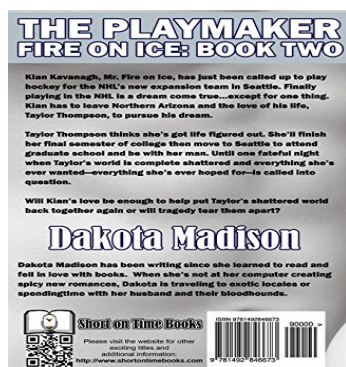
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Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was a French philosopher, historian of ideas, and social theorist and activist; he wrote many books, such as *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*, etc. Openly gay [see the James Miller biography, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*], he died of AIDS---the first public figure in France to die of the virus.

He wrote in the opening chapter of this 1984 book (by which time he knew that he was dying), "This series of studies is being published later than I had anticipated, and in a form that is altogether different. I will explain why. It was intended to be neither a history of sexual behaviors nor a history or representations, but a history of 'sexuality' I wanted first to dwell on that quite recent and banal notion of 'sexuality': to stand detached from it, bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated." (Pg. 3)

He continues, "In short, it was a matter of seeing how an 'experience' came to be constituted in modern Western societies, an experience that caused individuals to recognize themselves as subjects of a 'sexuality,' which was accessible to the very diverse fields of knowledge and linked to a system of rules and constraints. What I planned, therefore, was a history of the experience of sexuality, where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture." (Pg. 4)

He adds, "it seemed to me that one could not very well analyze the formation and development of the experience of sexuality from the eighteenth century onward, without doing a historical and critical study dealing with desire and the desiring subject? Thus, in order to understand how the modern individual could experience himself as a subject of a 'sexuality,' it was essential first to determine how, for centuries, Western man had been brought to recognize himself as the object of desire." (Pg. 5-6) He goes on, "I had to choose: either stick to the plan I had set? or reorganize the whole study around the slow formation, in antiquity, of a hermeneutics of the self. I opted for the latter?" (Pg. 6)

He says, "It seemed to me, therefore, that the question that ought to guide my inquiry was the following: how, why, and in what forms was sexuality constituted a moral domain? Why this ethical concern that was so persistent despite its varying forms and intensity?" (Pg. 10) He concludes, "These, then, are the reasons that led me to recenter my entire study on the genealogy of desiring man, from classical antiquity through the first centuries of Christianity?"

this volume? is devoted to the manner in which sexual activity was problematized by philosophers and doctors in classical Greek culture.? (Pg. 12)

He observes, ?In the reflection of the Greeks of the classical period, it does seem that the moral problematization of food, drink, and sexual activity was carried out in a rather similar manner. Foods, wines, and relations with women and boys constituted analogous ethical material; they brought forces into play that were natural, but that always tended to be excessive, and they all raised the same question: how could one, how must one ?make use? of this dynamics of pleasures, desires, and acts? A question of right use.? (Pg. 51-52) Later, he adds, ?in classical Greek thought, the ?ascetics? that enabled one to make oneself into an ethical subject was an integral part? of the practice of a virtuous life, which was also the life of a ?free? man in the full, positive and political sense of the word.? (Pg. 77)

He states, ?Were the Greeks bisexual, then? Yes, if we mean by this that a Greek could? be enamored of a boy or a girl? that it was common for a male to change to a preference for women after ?boy-loving? inclinations of his youth. But ? we need to take note of the fact that they did not recognize two kinds of ?desire?? each claiming a share of men?s hearts of appetites? To their way of thinking, what made it possible to desire a man or a woman was simply the appetite that nature had implanted in man?s heart for ?beautiful? human beings, whatever their sex might be.? (Pg. 188) He adds, ?The Greeks could not imagine that a man might need a different nature?in order to love a man; but they were inclined to think that the pleasures one enjoyed in such a relationship ought to be given an ethical form different from the one that was required when it came to loving a woman.? (Pg. 192)

He suggests, ?what is important to grasp here is not why the Greeks had a fondness for boys but why they had a ?pederasty?; that is, why they elaborated a courtship practice, a moral reflection, and? a philosophical asceticism, around that fondness.? (Pg. 214)

While this series becomes increasingly controversial with each succeeding volume, it offers keen insight into Foucault?s thought at the twilight of his life.

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