its comprehensive and accurate coverage, its glossary, bibliographies, and thirteen maps, including battle plans; and so will many. But I’d prefer an introductory textbook which attempted to do the following:

i) cut down on content in favour of source analysis;
ii) emphasize the importance of asking questions, and ways of arriving at interesting ones;
iii) use a comparative approach in regard to ancient sources;
iv) use visual evidence not as mere illustrations but as sources for critical examination;
v) incorporate detailed, contrasting expressions of modern opinion;
vi) allow the possibility that some issues might not be capable of firm resolution;
vii) spell out fundamental features of note-taking and essay-writing; and
viii) in general exhibit a fundamental concern for exemplification of the method of the historian with respect to asking questions, document analysis, interpretation of images, construction of an argument, and so on.

Tom Stevenson
University of Auckland


 Appropriately dedicated to his partner and love in general, Clarke’s book fills a void in the study of Roman erotic art. Far
from being another coffee-table picture book, where works of art with erotic scenes are depicted out of context, *Looking at Lovemaking* explores Roman sexual imagery with a fresh outlook and in its spatial, temporal, and cultural context.

One would expect that human sexuality, being universal, would be expressed in similar ways even among people of different historical periods or cultures from ours. Clarke, however, subscribes to and supports the view that sexuality is culturally specific and culturally constructed: the sexual acts may indeed appear familiar (well, to most of us), but the meanings and associations they had for the Roman viewer were significantly different. Roman erotic images are far more complicated than they appear at a first glance.

The picture drawn from literary sources conflicts with the visual evidence, because, while literature was addressed to the literary male elite citizen, art transcended class and gender boundaries by being accessible to everyone, including illiterates, women, and people of all classes, even slaves. The much richer visual record reveals a wider range of sexualities and a sexual behaviour much more daring than what Roman writers want us to believe. Deliberately, as Clarke argues, because scenes of adult males making love or scenes of oral sex, considered even more disgraceful in literature, break the standards of morality established by the elite (not that the upper classes did not engage in such activities!). Thus, for example, the romantic male-to-male scenes produced during the Augustan age contrast with the textual evidence exhorting the renewal of the morals and virtues of the Republic. Some acts are known only in visual sources. Unique, for example, is the representation on an apparently custom-ordered gem, where the adult male clearly shows his pleasure at being penetrated, through his erect penis, a rare exhibition of the mutual pleasure of male lovers.

The aim of Clarke’s study is to attempt to view erotic life through Roman eyes and avoid applying modern society’s
preconceived ideas and values to Roman society. Thus he prefers
the more neutral terms 'male-to-male' or 'female-to-female
lovemaking' instead of 'homosexual scenes'; wisely, since in
Roman society, as in some modern ones, what defined sexual
behaviour and its propriety was not the gender of the partners or
the specific act but their role (penetrator/penetrated) and social
status (free/slave). Even the term 'erotic' for the Roman scenes
should be used with caution, since it involves a subjective reaction
of the viewer. Thus images of an erect phallus, far from being
considered sexually arousing, were symbols averting the Evil Eye.

On the other hand, although some scenes were sexually
stimulating for the Romans, others, which may seem so to us, must
have been humorous to them. Thus in the outrageous erotic
vignettes, serving as 'labels' for the lockers in the dressing room of
the recently discovered Suburban Baths at Pompeii, where 'the
level of perversion is increased in each successive scene', with
threesomes and foursomes recalling de Sade's group sex, the
intention may have been more to shock and amuse than titillate. I
find an additional level of humour here: the lockers people would
choose to put their clothes in may have pointed to their
preferences in sex, as if they were undressing for sex not for
bathing.

In this pre-Christian society, devoid of sin or shame
associated with sex, sexual pleasure was highly valued and
belonged to the religious realm of Venus. Explicit representations
of sexual acts were everywhere: they decorated luxury drinking
cups and gems, but also mass-produced lamps and vases; they
adorned the walls of elegant houses, the dressing rooms of public
baths, but also humble houses, pubs and bordellos. Far from being
considered obscene or pornographic, images of lovemaking were
connected with notions of upper-class luxury and culture. The
cultured upper class included erotic scenes together with other
nonsexual themes in the wall decoration of their houses, indeed in
their most public rooms used for the reception of guests. As Clarke
persuasively argues, such scenes do not necessarily identify a room
as destined for sex, but allow the owner to exhibit wealth and connoisseurship by juxtaposing paintings from different periods that contrasted strongly in style and subject matter.

But it was not only the elite who enjoyed having in their possession and looking at works of art with sexual scenes. Erotic paintings expressed the upper-class fantasies of the lower classes, from former slaves who included refined pictures of lovemaking in their reception rooms, to visitors to poor brothels who were drawn into a world of luxury, beauty, and sexual dalliance by alluring erotic pictures. The wide distribution of lamps with schematic erotic images confirms the appeal of such scenes to all Romans and even the romanised Gauls who aspired to a slice of Roman culture.

Another approach Clarke has successfully explored is the consideration of the female viewer's point of view and the discrimination between the different ways Roman men and women looked at erotic images. In the dressing room of the Suburban Baths, which was certainly unisex, the images sent different messages to men and women. For example, the emphasis on some scenes is on the woman, where the beauty of her naked body is highlighted or where she is enjoying cunnilingus performed by a diminutive kneeling man who does not receive anything in return, accentuating the woman's pleasure alone. The male viewer may have laughed at the subservient role of the male partner, but the female would have derived satisfaction from seeing the woman taking the limelight.

A few objections now. In the section examining the Greek forerunners, Clarke says (22, 24) that the male-female couple replaces the group orgy in the fourth century BC. But certainly there were several depictions of isolated couples on the interior of red figure cups already in the Late Archaic period. I am also not sure why black bath attendants and swimmers have been included in this study since, even though they are equipped with large penises or huge erections, they do not engage in sexual activities (as Clarke delimits his study on 13). They were an exotic extreme
image that served as a powerful apotropaic symbol by provoking laughter. Finally, Clarke does not consider the implications of the appearance of all male-to-male scenes on vases and not on wall paintings (with the exception of the Suburban Baths).

The scenes are meticulously described and thoughtfully discussed, and are accompanied by abundant photographs of high quality, several of them in colour. A few minor problems: the round object held by the attendant in fig. 32 cannot be a shield (100) but an empty basin, like the one next to the attendant on the pendant scene (fig. 33). The vessels beneath the bed in figs. 37 and 40 are not symposium vases (116)—why would there be only one cup for both partners?—but rather the ubiquitous pitcher and basin for washing up (cf. figs. 60, 94). To my eyes, the male swimmer in the mosaic from Este (fig. 48) is turning his front to the viewer, not his back as the author believes (138). He would thus form a kind of heraldic counterpart to the woman on the right in this very symmetrical composition, but still his palm (the right one in this case) would have been wrongly highlighted. Finally, I cannot read the gesture of the boy on the Arretine bowl (fig. 26) and the cameo glass vessels (pls. 4-5) as an urging movement but rather as an attempt or pretence to resist. (Contrast the woman who is clearly encouraging the man on another cameo glass vessel [pl. 3]) This could have been an iconographic convention which would accord with the Greek practice where ideal behaviour for the younger was to tolerate stoically the sexual advances of the older and not show that he welcomed them.

Better editing would have caught misprints such as 'an great number' (55); 'in Roman and in Roman Italy' (141); 'torso up with on' (165), 'verison' (283); 'Hermaphroodite' (342); 'Abbonzanda' (355). Other errors are more confusing: 'on her left shoulder' instead of 'right' (102); 'His right hand' instead of 'left' (102); 'A small girl at the lower right' instead of 'lower left' (105); '42 was a room for lovemaking' instead of 43 (162). On 229 Clarke says that the man in the middle of the threesome from the Pompeian Suburban Baths grasps the man behind him with his right hand,
but on 231 he refers to the man at the end who clasps the hand of the man in the middle. A spot check on the index showed that there is no *cinaedus* on 229.

Clear plans, all done by the author, help to set the paintings in their architectural context. Many of the plans, however, lack an indication of the north, so that when reference is made to particular walls of a room, the reader is at a loss to locate them (e.g. 187). In fig. 67 there are no letters *d, j, u,* or *v* designating rooms, even though according to 178 the letters go from *a* through to *v* (there is even an additional letter, *y*); in fig. 53 there are duplicate letters.

But all these are minor quibbles. This handsomely produced and reasonably priced publication has beautifully shown the Romans' pleasure for not only engaging in but also looking at lovemaking, from the sensuous, elegant couples in graceful embraces to the more adventurous and even outrageous poses and combinations that would have remained at the fantasy level for most and have amused others. The book is highly recommended to art historians and classicists and anyone else who finds lovemaking interesting. I suspect there would be many ...

Gina Salapata
Massey University