

Sheila Murnaghan - March 7th, 1992

Male and Female in Classical Myth and Literature

In the last ten years, feminist approaches to literature have brought change into even the conservative field of classics. The most important redefinition is that between sex and gender: sex is biological/anatomical while gender is social/cultural. Gender differences are extensions and elaborations on biological differences, including the expectations of society and individuals for roles and aspirations of men and women. Many societies have incorrectly assumed that gender differences are determined by sexual differences; with a feminist shift in focus, more attention is being paid to the relationship between men and women in classical culture, though the lack of source material written by women hampers this.

production of offspring. The passion for procreation has as its lowest form the bodily (physical beings who will take the place of their parents) & men who see this as good love women and produce children. Those whose procreancy is of the spirit and who wish to produce wisdom (poetry, works of art, law codes, etc.) turn not to women but to men; male homosexual relationships are vn men reach true virtue, they attain immortality too.

Hesiod and Plato both deal with attempts to attain immortality, the highest form of which is shown to be not physical reproduction, which requires women and eventually displaces the father, but procreative power detached from women and located in men (literally in Hesiod, linguistically in Plato). The middle road in Plato used a procreancy metaphor () with