



# **Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe**

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# Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe

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This distinctive collection explores the construction of genealogies—in both the biological sense of procreation and the metaphorical sense of heritage and cultural patrimony. Focusing specifically on the discourses that inform such genealogies, *Generation and Degeneration* moves from Greco-Roman times to the recent past to retrace generational fantasies and discords in a variety of related contexts, from the medical to the theological, and from the literary to the historical.

The discourses on reproduction, biology, degeneration, legacy, and lineage that this book broaches not only bring to the forefront concepts of sexual identity and gender politics but also show how they were culturally constructed and reconstructed through the centuries by medicine, philosophy, the visual arts, law, religion, and literature. The contributors reflect on a wide range of topics—from what makes men “manly” to the identity of Christ’s father, from what kinds of erotic practices went on among women in sixteenth-century seraglios to how men’s hemorrhoids can be variously labeled. Essays scrutinize stories of menstruating males and early writings on the presumed inferiority of female bodily functions. Others investigate a psychomorphology of the clitoris that challenges Freud’s account of lesbianism as an infantile stage of sexual development and such topics as the geographical origins of medicine and the materialization of genealogy in the presence of Renaissance theatrical ghosts.

This collection will engage those in English, comparative, Italian, Spanish, and French studies, as well as in history, history of medicine, and ancient and early modern religious studies.

*Contributors.* Kevin Brownlee, Marina Scordilis Brownlee, Elizabeth Clark, Valeria Finucci, Dale Martin, Gianna Pomata, Maureen Quilligan, Nancy Siraisi, Peter Stallybrass, Valerie Traub

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