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**Making Slaves in the Bedroom. Making Society in the Household. Sexual Vulnerability and Sexual Desire as Historical Agents in Late Antiquity**

Abstract:

The households of the late antique world, for all of their variety, shared a common role in serving as the foundation stone of wider social organisation and, indeed, of the Roman state itself. Not only were households a microcosm of society, but they were also the workshops in which social hierarchies were produced and exported throughout the Empire. In these spaces, residents negotiated the relationship between free and slave, parent and child, man and woman, citizen and foreigner. It is crucial to recognise how the vulnerability of slaves to sexual exploitation and the politics of sexual desire shaped the daily interactions that reinforced (or undermined) the social status of all involved, and thus the social makeup of the greater Mediterranean world. This paper explores these dynamics and how they impacted late Roman attitudes during an era that has been called an 'Age of Anxiety', when profound changes and unparalleled developments gave rise to a new medieval landscape.

Bio:

Erin Thomas Dailey (Associate Professor of Late Antique & Early Medieval History, University of Leicester) researches the transformation of the late Roman Empire into its early medieval successors: the barbarian kingdoms, the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Caliphate. He is the Principal Investigator for the ERC-Funded Consolidator Grant: 'Domestic Slavery and Sexual Exploitation in the Households of Europe, North Africa and the Near East, from Constantine to AD 900 / AH 287'. He is also the author of *Radegund: The Trials and Triumphs of a Merovingian Queen, Women in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), as well as *Queens, Consorts, Concubines: Gregory of Tours and Women of the Merovingian Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).