

IRIS

The Newsletter of the Lambda Classical Caucus Fall 2010

What to do at the APA

2011 LCC Panel -- San Antonio, Texas

Ancient "Unspeakable Vice" and Modern Pedagogy: Talking about Homosexuality in Classical Antiquity in the 21st Century Academy

Organizers: Konstantinos P. Nikoloutsos (Saint Joseph's University) and John P. Wood (University of North Carolina, Greensboro)

The panel seeks to assess the benefits and challenges of teaching homoerotic themes from Greek and Roman literature and art in today's academy. Questions addressed by the papers presented here include: How do we use ancient texts and images to raise awareness about sexual difference and promote modern LGBT issues? Is there a canon of authors and works considered to be more suitable for our goal than others? To what extent is the explicitness of the material taught affected by the mission, size, location, and student body of the academic institution? How do we act in response to administrative suppression?

1. Sophie J. V. Mills. University of North Carolina, Asheville
"Five Young Men, Aristophanes, and Me."

2. H. Christian Blood. University of California, Santa Cruz
"Transclassics at "The Most Radical University in America.""

3. E. Del Chrol. Marshall University
"Un-INaturalizing the [Un-INatural]."

4. Julie Hruby. Berea College

"Sensitive Topics and Sensitivity to Context: Teaching Ancient Sexuality at a Christian College."

5. Thomas K. Hubbard. University of Texas, Austin

"Greek Pederasty, the Construction of 'Childhood,' and Academic Freedom."

6. Catie Mihalopoulos. California State University, Channel Islands

"Colonial Stereotypes of Ancient Greek, Indian, and Modern (Homo)Sexual Visual Representations."

The LCC/WCC graduate student cocktail hour will be Friday January 7th at the bar in Sazo's (in the Marriot Rivercenter hotel). 6:30-7:30.

The LCC Roundtable will be "Queering Courtship." Check your APA program for the day and time.

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Call for contributors.

Recently during a discussion on HistSex, Jonathan Ned Katz, Founder and Co-Director of OutHistory.org, indicated that he would like to have a chronological, annotated bibliography of Classics studies dealing with gender and sexuality on his site. Michael Broder (mbroder@mbroder.com) is willing to spearhead the effort to create this bibliography, and he is looking for suggestions and ideas. Note that he is currently finishing another important project, so please expect replies after September 1st. You may also send contributions to your Iris editor, Keely Lake (klake@wayland.org) as she will be working with Michael on the organization of the project.

Call for Abstracts. Getting What You Want: Queering Ancient Courtship
2012 Annual Meeting of the APA, Philadelphia, PA

Sponsored by the Lambda Classical Caucus

Organized by H. Christian Blood (UC Santa Cruz) and John P. Wood (UNC Greensboro)

It has long been supposed that understanding same-sex acts and identities would shed light on Greco-Roman sex, but less attention has been given to the queer content and possibilities that anticipate the act. Understood as the plurality of behaviors, conventions, and signifiers mobilized to bring people together, courtship had value beyond erotic situations for forging alliances, conserving property, attaining upward mobility—and for getting what you want. Courtship, then, would seem inherently conservative, serving and preserving individuals as well as social entities. Yet, for every Kallirhoe, there is a Pergamene Boy, and for every Orpheus and Eurydice, there is Socrates and Alcibiades. Ancient texts lampoon the established social institution of courtship, and this panel seeks to explore how disruptive, subversive, and comedic to established protocol these representations may have been.

Following David Halperin's formulations, we understand "queer" broadly: as a strategic practice and practical strategy that refutes heteronormative logic, as a privileged site for the criticism and analysis of cultural discourses, which, lacking an essence of its own, acquires meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm (1995, 60-62). Questions that individual papers might address include but are not limited to the following:

- > What disciplinary and interpretive tools (e.g., archaeology, anthropology, feminist theory, queer theory, psychoanalysis, religious studies, etc.) are well-suited to queering courtship?
- > How did traditions of courtship differ for same-sex couples, or in what ways did same-sex couples insert themselves into heterosexual courtship behaviors from which they were excluded?
- > What new light might queer approaches shed on familiar but non-normative heterosexual configurations—such as Jocasta and Oedipus, Phaedra and Hippolytus, or Lucius and the Corinthian Matrona?
- > What are the public and private parameters of courtship, and how are they interrelated?
- > What are the power dynamics of same-sex courtship? Is it more egalitarian than its heterosexual counterpart?
- > Can a queering of courtship recuperate problematic female figures from antiquity, such as Clodia? Given the overall suspicion of female erotic agency, how can we recover the evidence for, and significance of, courtship by women, whether of other women or of men?
- > How might queer perspectives illuminate heterosexual narratives, such as Greek Romance? How do courtship stories reflect cultural norms as they move, e.g. East to West, pastoral to urban?
- > What are the challenges, and benefits, of incorporating queer approaches in the classroom?
- > In the end, how can we tell whether, and how, both parties get what they want?

One page abstracts are due by February 5, 2011, and will be anonymously refereed. Submissions should be anonymous, and otherwise adhere to APA guidelines for the formatting of abstracts. Please do not send abstracts to panel organizers; e-mail them as word documents to Mary-Kay Gamel (mkgamel@ucsc.edu). Questions may be addressed to the panel organizers jpwwood2@uncg.edu or hchristianblood@gmail.com.

The Unspeakable Vice of the Americans

Andrew Lear *Classicos*, Pomona College
Meryl Altman *Women's Studies*, DePauw University

If everything is dangerous then we still have something to do. —Foucault

Perhaps like many people you have retained a vague idea that the French were more sophisticated than the rest of us, particularly with respect to sex... and to theory. Not always true, it appears, at least not where queers and/or feminism are concerned.

At first glance there is nothing about *L'homosexualité féminine dans l'Antiquité grecque et romaine* (Les belles lettres, 2007), a splendidly solid work of scholarship by impeccably credentialed Classicist Sandra Boehringer, that seems apt to cause a moral panic. True, the cover does show two women kissing each other rather happily, but surely this would be unexceptionable in a land where subway posters routinely show bare-naked women advertising the most ordinary household products? Under the cover can be found the first coherent survey of female-female erotic relations in Classical Antiquity, which manages, by considering each of the admittedly few sources intensively in relationship to their periods, authors, and genres, to derive an astonishing amount of information from and about them. Boehringer explodes a number of persistent myths about her topic: for instance, she shows that censorious attitudes like those of certain Roman writers (Juvenal, Martial, etc.) are not found in Greek sources before the Imperial period. Nonetheless, the book is not at all contentious in tone, nor is it the work of an outsider—while highly readable, it remains unimpeachably philological in its careful excavation of text and context.¹ When it was published in 2007 by Les belles lettres, the publishing house known mainly for the Budé editions of Classical texts, one of us gave it a glowing review (CW 103.1 [2009], 120-1) and we take this opportunity to recommend it to Iris' readers.

Many of the French reviews were similarly enthusiastic. But the book was also greeted by astonishingly virulent, bizarre, and — considering that one of the reviews in question appeared in a scholarly journal — unscholarly attacks which, for all the faults of American academia (and don't get us started on that), we have never seen and cannot imagine seeing in any American scholarly forum.

The first attack was the strangest, both because of its vulgarity and blatant sexism and homophobia, and — even more — because it appeared on *Les belles lettres'* own on-line "Chronicle" in a column written by Michel Desgranges, the very editor who had accepted the book!²

We will do our best to disentangle Desgranges' poisonous "witticisms," which involve extended chains of doubles-entendres — the effect aimed at being, presumably, Aristophanic, except that it isn't especially funny.

The first word of the Chronicle posting's title ("Broutons; genres; pois chiches," meaning, it would seem "Let us graze; genders; chickpeas")³ sets the tone. "Brouteuse" (grazer) is an offensive term for a Lesbian in French; the verbal form is sometimes extended to "brouter le gazon" (to graze on the lawn). This is perhaps close in tone to the English "rug-muncher." Desgranges starts his column by talking about the donkeys at his (country?) house grazing on "erect blades of grass" with "their agile tongues"; in short, he flirts with a level of vulgarity one hardly expects to find on a publisher's web-page, particularly in reference to one of its own publications. Lest he seem merely homophobic and not also sexist, Desgranges later in the same sentence refers to the book as "un ouvrage de dame" (a lady's book—we are meant to think of such female "accomplishments" as doily-making and piano-tinkling) and, at the end of the posting, plays about with feminine forms of the words "author" and "professor" (the equivalent of calling her an "authoress" or a "professolette"), as if he had trouble accepting the existence of female authors and professors.

There is more of the same. The bulk of the column, however, is dedicated to attacking gender studies — which Desgranges says comes from Berkeley, the Ivy League (really?), and the Village Voice (anymore?) and which he glosses for his reader: "en français: propagande féministe" (in French: feminist propaganda). He brings up Foucault to associate him with "the celebration of fist-fucking" and goes on to say that common sense tells us that sexuality is a fact of nature and has no history. In his view, it is obvious that Greek pederasty is the same thing as modern homosexuality, merely subject to a different set of "rules, taboos, and multiple persecutions." He claims that aside from Sappho 1, all other references to female-female love in Sappho are "the fruit of the imagination," overlooking such substantial and well-known fragments as 16 and 31. One assumes that Desgranges, the editor of a publishing house that publishes largely in the *Classicos* and a frequent editorial collaborator of Pierre Vidal-Naquet, has some kind of Classical education, but it is hardly on display here.

But, OK, so some altercocker (en français: vieux con) has a public fit and has to be led quietly from the room — aren't we making too much of this? especially as the post was withdrawn from *Les belles lettres'* website three days after it appeared, and the editor's column soon ceased appearing.⁴ *Le Monde*

quickly published a vigorous response to the posting (12/7/07), starting with the Roland Barthes' words "la guerre contre l'intelligence...." (the war against intelligence), alongside a glowing and intelligent review by noted queer studies scholar Louis-Georges Tin. This was soon followed by similar accolades, in such places as *Le point*, *Clio* and *La vie des idées*, which ignore the fracas and concentrate on the book's many virtues. Isn't it more dignified just to ignore this sort of attack (as supportive French colleagues have judged it best to do)? And shouldn't we be over this by now?

Except that Desgranges was not alone. Another very strange "review" by Prof. Danielle Gourevitch, who is a highly decorated senior historian of medicine, appeared recently in the *très bien-pensant* review, *Latomus* (69 [2010] 223-5). Gourevitch too makes jokes about the gender of the word "author,"⁵ and attacks gay and lesbian studies as an American import based on the "passionate exaggerations" of, among others, Froma Zeitlin. Incoherent (literally) with rage, her review willfully misunderstands the intent of the book, which she seems barely to have opened; instead she devotes over half her space to a baroquely detailed story about nineteenth-century semi-pornographic histories of syphilis in Classical Antiquity. Somehow Gourevitch imagines that Boehringer (as well as other authors on similar topics including Craig Williams) writes to shock and titillate the public. She refers to the book as "prétendûment scabreux" (intending to scandalize) and predicts that it won't be successful because movies and television present more daring scenes. Yet she then complains that it is boring and contains pages and pages on hypothetical questions. The logic would appear to be that two women together are by definition pornographic, thus a book which failed to satisfy the prurience of readers, but turned out to contain scholarly analysis and argument, would be a disappointment.

But logic does not seem to be Gourevitch's concern, at least not in this review. She sarcastically compliments Boehringer for her knowledge of constructionist bibliography but seems to misunderstand constructionism. She mentions nothing from the book in any detail except to complain, entirely without substantiation, that Boehringer writes imprecisely about her own (Gourevitch's) specialty, *Caelius Aurelianus*. She spends most of her review discussing other books, complaining for instance about Géraldine Puccini-Delbey's *La vie sexuelle à Rome*, which, in Gourevitch's view has simplistic ideas about penetration — an issue of no possible relevance to Boehringer's arguments. When she does discuss Boehringer, she focuses on the cover illustration (also mentioned by Desgranges, in a particularly vulgar aside) and the blurb, which perhaps

represent a large percentage of what she read. In short, we have never seen such a crude, obtuse, and unprofessional review of a scholarly book in a (prétendûment) scholarly journal.

Where can this be coming from? Gourevitch herself has co-authored a not-bad book on women, but she is a bitter enemy of feminism. In praise of her own *La femme dans la Rome antique* (Hachette, 2001), for instance, she says (21):

This is not a feminist undertaking. It does not seek to have the "provocative" or "stimulating" effect that too many American works of this type claim to have, bringing together a hard-line, methodical dogmatism with an overactive imagination. It will not be a militant book, but simply a history book, which will avoid forcing the pseudo-certainties of today onto the past.

Boehringer's introduction mentions Gourevitch by name, taking dignified exception to an article in *L'antiquité classique*,⁶ from which she quotes Gourevitch as saying that "it is not possible to be simultaneously a militant homosexual and a historian." We were curious enough to download this piece, and discovered that it too takes aim at Foucault,⁷ Amy Richlin (who had the bad taste not to cite one of Gourevitch's own articles), Froma Zeitlin (again), the contributors to Judy Hallett and Marilyn Skinner's *Roman Sexualities*, who are guilty of "gross brutality with regard to love," and so on. The "review" ends with a homophobic *cri de coeur*, which seems important to cite in full. Fasten your seat belts:

It seems to me dishonourable for a historian to confuse history with politics. The history of sexuality is particularly compromised by the fight in favor of homosexuality, since it is certainly not the work of the historian to dictate the adoption of one sexual practice or another to his contemporaries. Quite the opposite: it is one of the duties of the historian not to weigh down historical research with the emotive and political burdens of the present day. Yet the battle in favor of the banalization of homosexuality is a protest against social reality. It calls for the destruction of society, to which the masculine/feminine opposition is essential, for all of us live by means of these structuring symbols of which the homosexual project makes a mockery. The grandeur of Greece, and then of Rome, is to have founded Western civilization, having understood very well

that even if many types of sexual and affective relations are permissible from time to time, they are not all equally normative. A couple is the union of differences; a homosexual couple is of a different nature and nothing can be based upon it. If I may be excused for stating the obvious, a man is not a woman; a woman is not a man; a man who plays at being a woman is only playing a role, and whoever insists otherwise is stuck in make-believe. However respectable it may be, a homosexual relationship is a private matter and, like all private matters outside marriage, should not be imposed as a human right *erga omnes*. Thus in my view it is impossible to be both a militant homosexual and a historian. The program of these "colleagues" is not historical; there is in it neither concern for truth, nor prudence, nor humility, nor honesty, nor objectivity, none of the virtues toward which the historian should strive. If at least it was a question of amorous passion, one might feel some sympathy; but it is more of a political passion, perhaps in some cases to destroy contemporary society, but usually, more despicably, to make a career of academic feminism or academic homosexuality, "gay" or lesbian: this is not yet a problem in French or Belgian universities, let's try to keep it that way! I understand that by saying this I risk being deprived of my voice in this journal which I care about, and to which I have contributed for many years. At least I will be glad to have done it. For this American stance is contributing to the destruction of the very conditions of life, and hedonism is not, can never be, a basis for life or for truth.⁸

It's almost a relief to see this sort of poison out in the open, isn't it, rather than to spend one's life wondering whether one is paranoid. Almost.

Now, if we may be excused from stating the obvious, to see queer and/or feminist studies as an invasive species imported from America (a "foreign fad," as people in the U.S. used to say about deconstruction) is, to say the least, underinformed--imagine queer studies without Foucault, feminism without Beauvoir?-- and unfair as well to European scholars working today. Among many important queer theorists who happen to be French we'd mention Didier Eribon, whose *Réflexions sur la question gay* (1999) has been translated by Michael Lacey as *Insult and the Making*

of the Gay Self (Duke, 2004); Francophone readers of Iris might be interested in the on-line journal "Genre, sexualité & société" (<http://gss.revues.org>); and there are undoubtedly many others whose work deserves to be better known outside the hexagon. Where feminism is concerned, one of us reads a list-serve (*etudesfeministes-l.simone.univ-tlse2.fr*) which certainly gives the impression that women's studies in France is alive and well and that French feminism (the real kind) continues to flourish and to develop in new directions, without waiting for instructions from California or New York. As far as Classics is concerned, Boehringer's work is certainly informed by the work of John Winkler, whose *Constraints of Desire* she translated into French, and Halperin, who has written a helpful and supportive preface to her book. But her work is equally informed by such French authorities as Luc Brisson (whom she thanks for directing her thesis), Claude Calame, and Nicole Lorau, as well as by the very British Kenneth Dover. Fingerpointing at the Americans seems utterly inappropriate given the fruitful interchanges apropos of vase-painting, drama, ritual, and really everything else, that began under structuralism and continue today.

There's surely nothing new about nationalist rhetoric being mobilized out of thin air to police sexual boundaries: think of syphilis, the "French disease" or the "English pox" depending on where you were standing; or think for that matter of "Persian" decadence. But one had vaguely felt that Classics in the twenty-first century was more cosmopolitan than other fields, or at least that it ought to be. Even Gourevitch herself, it would appear from Google, has deigned to be a visitor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, which was still in New Jersey the last time we looked.

Boehringer's book suggests that the newly aggressive attacks of Juvenal and Martial reflected the greater public presence and economic influence (if not power) that Roman women were actually beginning to have. Working by analogy, one could spin the would-be Juvenalisms of Desgranges and Gourevitch as signs that the French intellectual establishment is in fact increasingly open to a plurality of sexualities and methodologies, to a degree that Old Oligarchs find threatening. One could at least hope that's right. And undoubtedly Boehringer's critics have had to embarrass themselves by descending to this level of childish, incoherent pique precisely because the book is so thoroughly professional, and so very excellent. But on reflection, it does seem important not to leave this sort of thing unanswered. The attacks on Sandra Boehringer are attacks on all of us. And turning the other cheek to bullying merely licenses the bullies to continue.

So while it hardly seems fair to blame Sandra

Boehringer's book on San Francisco, it does seem right for American queer Classicists to receive it warmly – and we hope readers of *Iris* will do so.

¹ It began as a thesis at the EHESS (École des hautes études en sciences sociales) with funding from the Fondation Thiers (Académie française – CNRS).

² The posting was also sent to the Les belles lettres mailing list, which has 20,000 members.

³ “Chickpeas” seem to refer to Sappho 143, which Desgranges cites, but his point is unclear.

⁴ Note too that Les Belles Lettres has since published another book by Boehringer, an anthology co-edited with Louis-Georges Tin, *Homosexualité: Aimer en Grèce et à Rome*.

⁵ “Notre auteur, auteure, autrice”

⁶ “La sexualité de l’Antiquité : essai à propos de publications récentes.” *AC 68* (1999), 331-334.

⁷ “Mais Foucault, encore qu’il fit tout pour se déviriliser, avait la grave défaut d’être un homme et ne pouvait donc aller jusqu’au bout” (But Foucault, although he did everything possible to unman himself, had the grave defect of being a man and could therefore not go all the way.)

⁸ Il me semble que c’est un déshonneur pour un historien que de compromettre histoire et politique. L’histoire de la sexualité est particulièrement compromise avec la lutte en faveur de l’homosexualité, alors que ce n’est certainement pas le travail de l’historien que de dicter à ses contemporains l’adoption de telle ou telle conduite sexuelle. C’est au contraire un des devoirs de l’historien de ne pas investir la recherche historique des charges affectives et politiques de son présent. Or le combat en faveur de la banalisation de l’homosexualité est revendiquer la destruction de la société, où l’opposition entre le masculin et le féminin est essentielle, car chacun vit de symboles structurants que la revendication homosexuelle ridiculise. La grandeur de la Grèce puis de Rome est d’avoir fondé la société occidentale, en ayant bien compris que même si plusieurs types de relation sexuelle ou affective sont transitoirement admissibles, ils ne sont pas également normatifs. Un couple est une union de différences; un couple homosexuel est d’une autre nature et ne saurait être fondateur. On me pardonnera des évidences; un homme n’est pas une femme; une femme n’est pas un homme; un homme qui joue la femme ne joue qu’un rôle, et quiconque affirme le contraire s’enferme dans un simulacre. Si respectable qu’elle soit, une relation homosexuelle est une affaire privée qui, comme toute affaire privée hormis le mariage, ne s’impose pas erga omnes. Donc il n’est pas possible à mes yeux d’être à la fois homosexuel militant et historien. Le programme de ces “collègues” n’est pas historique; on ne trouve ni souci de vérité ni prudence ni humilité ni honnêteté ni objectivité, aucune des vertus auxquelles doit tendre l’historien. Si encore il s’agissait de passion amoureuse, on pourrait avoir quelque indulgence; mais il s’agit plutôt d’une sorte de passion politique, peut-être dans certains cas pour détruire la société actuelle, mais plus basement en général pour faire carrière dans le féminisme ou l’homosexualité universitaires, “gaïe” ou lesbienne: ce n’est pas un problème pour l’université française ou belge; essayons de nous en garder! Je comprends que je risque en disant cela d’être privée de ma parole en cette revue que j’aime et à laquelle je collabore depuis des années. Au moins je serai contente de l’avoir fait. Car cette prise de position américaine contribue à détruire les conditions même de la vie, et l’hédonisme n’est pas, ne sera jamais, fondateur de vie ou de vrai.



William Percy, James Jope, and Thomas Hubbard spoke at a session on Diachronic Changes in Greek Pederasty chaired by Beert Verstraete at the Canadian Classical Association's meeting in Quebec City in May.

Call for Papers. LCC Paul Rehak Award 2011

Nominations are now being received for the Lambda Classical Caucus's annual prize, named in memory of Paul Rehak, Classics professor and former LCC co-chair. The Rehak award honors the excellence of a publication relating to the LCC's mission, including, but not limited to, homo-social and homoerotic relationships and environments, ancient sexuality and gender roles, and representation of the gendered body. The range of eligible work covers the breadth of ancient Mediterranean society, from prehistory to late antiquity, and the various approaches of classicists drawing on textual and material culture.

Articles and book chapters from monographs or edited volumes, published in the past three years (i.e. 2008, 2009, 2010) are eligible. Self-nominations are welcome; the nomination and selection process is confidential. Membership in the Caucus is not required, nor is any specific rank or affiliation. Nominations should be made by October 31, 2010 to the LCC co-chairs, Bryan Burns, bburns@wellesley.edu, and Deborah Kamen, dkamen@uw.edu. Please provide full bibliographic information, a copy of the text, and/or contact information for the nominee. The award will be announced at the 2011 WCC-LCC opening night reception at the APA/AIA.

To honor Paul's memory, the LCC has established a fund that supports the continued existence of these awards. Please send donations to:

Ruby Blondell (LCC Rehak Fund)
Dept. of Classics, Box 353110
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195

Call for Papers. The 2011 LCC Graduate Student Paper Award

Have you seen an amazing graduate student paper addressing queer issues? Please consider nominating!

This award is designed to encourage and reward scholarship by pre-Ph.D. scholars on issues related to the LCC's mission, including, but not limited to: homosocial and homoerotic relationships and environments, ancient sexuality and gender roles, representations of the gendered body, and queer theory.

We ask for nominations of oral papers presented by a pre-Ph.D. scholar at a conference (including, but not limited to the APA/AIA and CAMWS) from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010 (ca. 20 minutes in length as delivered). To nominate, please email the LCC co-chairs, Bryan Burns, bburns@wellesley.edu, and Deborah Kamen, dkamen@uw.edu, with the presenter's name and email address and the title of the paper. Self-nominations are encouraged; information related to nominations is confidential. Membership in the Caucus is not required to be eligible for these awards. Nominations accepted until October 31, 2010. The winner will be announced at the 2011 WCC-LCC opening night reception at the APA/AIA.