

# *Iris*

*The Newsletter of the Lambda Classical Caucus*  
*Fall 2011*

This year's LCC Panel will be held on Friday, January 6, at 8:30 AM

--don't stay up too late at the notorious LCC/WCC/CSWMG party!

## GETTING WHAT YOU WANT: QUEERING ANCIENT COURTSHIP

Organizers:

H. Christian Blood (Santa Clara University)

& John P. Wood (University of North Carolina, Greensboro)

Michael Broder (University of South Carolina)

"Mentula Quem Pascit: Queering Courtship in Martial and Juvenal"

Jessica Westerhold (University of Toronto)

"Queer Exchanges: Iphis and Ianthe in Ovid's Metamorphoses"

Mark Masterson (University of Victoria, Wellington)

"The Significance of Courting Paul"

Damian Tremblay (University of Buffalo)

"Give Him All You've Got: Queering the Greek Anthology"

Respondent: Marilyn Skinner (University of Arizona)

### Table of Contents

Call for the 2012 Rehak Award	p. 2
Call for the 2012 Grad Student Award	p. 2
Article: Know thy Students, by Julie Hruby	p. 3
Book Review: James Davidson's <i>The Greeks and Greek Love</i> , by Jeffrey Carnes	p. 5
Call for Papers, APA 2013	p. 13
Call for Reviewers	p. 13

### Call for Papers: LCC Paul Rehak Award 2012

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, homosocial 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. 2009, 2010, 2011) 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, 2011 to the LCC co-chairs, Deborah Kamen, [dkamen@uw.edu](mailto:dkamen@uw.edu), and Bruce Frier, [bwfrier@umich.edu](mailto:bwfrier@umich.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 2012 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 2012 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, 2010 to June 30, 2011 (ca. 20 minutes in length as delivered). To nominate, please email the LCC co-chairs, Deborah Kamen, [dkamen@uw.edu](mailto:dkamen@uw.edu), and Bruce Frier, [bwfrier@umich.edu](mailto:bwfrier@umich.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, 2011. The winner will be announced at the 2012 WCC-LCC opening night reception at the APA/AIA.

## Know thy Students, by Julie Hruby

Three years ago, I arrived at Berea College to take a tenure-track job, having taught at a few other, mostly larger, institutions as an instructor or visitor. I had thought myself an able teacher when I arrived, but my experiences at Berea have taught me a great deal. The college encourages strong pedagogy and recognizes that many of its students have radically different communities of origin from its faculty, and that it is critical to bridge that gap. As a result, new faculty are given copious data, speak with students and experienced faculty and staff, and are taken on a week-long tour of the Appalachian region, from which the majority of our students come.

It has become increasingly clear to me that, while there are differences between the backgrounds of each of my students at Berea and my own, there are equally significant differences between students and members of the faculty at any other institution, including elite ones. It is easy to assume that our students think as we do, learn as we do, come from where we do, and value what we do. The students who are most like us are also likely to interact most with us, reinforcing our beliefs about what students are or should be like, while the students who are least like us also tend to interact less, giving us skewed impressions of who our students are.

In fact, since students tend to be diverse in a number of different ways, each student differs in significant ways from each professor. Students vary in race, culture, language, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, level of confidence in the classroom, and so on. No student does, or should, wish to be exactly like his or her professors. Even those who are most like us do not share all of our assumptions and values; if nothing else, most are already of a different generation, even when we just finished school ourselves.

I find that understanding who my students are helps me teach better. On a basic level, knowing their backgrounds tells me what they are likely to know already (do they know what a transitive verb is? Have they heard of Judith Butler? The Parthenon?), which helps me know what to teach. It can also help me know how to teach; teaching and learning rely on communication, and knowing my students' backgrounds helps me understand how they communicate, how they expect me to communicate, and how I can help them to communicate more effectively with audiences outside their own backgrounds. It can help me convey complex concepts in ways that are (hopefully) more comprehensible and appealing.

Perhaps more importantly, I can better empathize with the students for whom school has sometimes been an alienating experience, including those who come from under-privileged backgrounds, those who were "too smart" or "too opinionated" for their high schools, and those who see school primarily as a means to an end (a good job). Understanding and empathizing with my students can also help me learn better. Students are more likely to call me on my own prejudices if they trust me, and they are more likely to trust me if I know enough about them that I can talk with them, rather than at them. We all know that it is important to use understanding to reach our students, but the task can be overwhelming; most academics (myself included) are introverts. I would suggest that we can systematically go about learning who our students are, and that by investing relatively small amounts of time and energy at critical junctures, we can build bridges, with positive results for student learning, retention, and graduation rates. Large class sizes can impede efforts to understand individual students, but even so, there is value to meeting and speaking with as many students as institutional structures permit.

With that in mind, I have collected twelve approaches to building familiarity with students:

1. Read direct research. Check with the office of institutional research and its web page, which should have data about the student body, including gender balance, range of racial and geographical back

grounds, high school class ranks of incoming students, etc. The National College Health Assessment has information on topics like sexual activity, mental and emotional health, violence, and substance use. Various institution-specific surveys may tell you what kinds of careers the institution's graduates have, or how likely students are to socialize with members of another racial group, or what spiritual or religious beliefs students hold. I especially like to return to data when it is relevant to a course I teach; for example, before teaching a course on ancient gender and sexuality, it is useful to know how the members of the student body identify their own sexualities.

2. Speak with those whose jobs give them broad perspectives: recruiters, financial aid officers, campus mental health and career counselors. Ask questions. What kinds of challenges do many of the students at this institution face? How do students cope with those challenges? To whom can I send students when they need help? (Incidentally, I find that if I give a name, students are more likely to follow through: "talk with Marilyn in financial aid - she's fantastic!" works better than "talk to financial aid").

3. Go into students' communities when possible. Most of us teach at institutions that recruit to some extent locally or regionally, and most of us don't come from the place where we teach. I find it helpful to experience parts of the local community outside my own socio-economic class, race, religion, etc., by attending religious services, eating at restaurants, or engaging in activities I might not ordinarily try.

4. Develop strong relationships with a few students. I am fortunate enough to have had a series of undergraduate teaching assistants who have been excellent sources for student perceptions of workloads, majors, activities, course registration software, and so on.

5. Talk with students from classes informally whenever possible, especially the students who don't seek attention. I try to chat for a few minutes before or after each class and, ideally, over food. I eat with students at the cafeteria occasionally and learn as much as possible about where they come from (community, family, self) as well as where they are now and where they hope to go.

6. Engage in shameless bribery. I offer extra credit to students who visit office hours the first week of class, bringing whatever appropriate object or photograph is most dear to them to show me. I find that students who have come to my office once are more likely to return.

7. Learn at least the basic history of the groups and identities represented in the classroom, keeping in mind that not all members of a group experience a shared identity in an identical way. I find that Jewish students may, for example, tend to be more aware of issues of genocide than are many other students, but no one student can speak for all members of a group, and an individual student may well be tired of having his or her identity as a member of a group subsume his or her individual identity.

8. Teach outside the physical classroom. I find that students are more likely to share while on the bus on a field trip, or while excavating the college ceramics studio waste heap, or while walking across campus to a good grassy spot for reading the *Lysistrata*, than they are in the classroom.

9. Appreciate diverse viewpoints, even the misguided ones. People have reasons for believing what they do, and expressing genuine interest in understanding why people believe what they do can facilitate useful conversation.

10. Reflect. I try to exercise the same critical thinking skills I would with any other area of inquiry, knowing that what I hear (or don't hear) from students and colleagues is affected by whatever dynamics of power and respect there are between us.

11. For further reading, investigate "culturally responsive pedagogy," a term used primarily by elementary educators working with students from minority racial or cultural backgrounds. It refers to an educational philosophy pioneered by Gloria Ladson-Billings, in which classroom activities and discussions are formed with conscious reference to the cultures from which students come. Many of the concepts, however, can be adapted to the college classroom and to other respects in which students' backgrounds vary.

12. Set boundaries that support your own self-care. The risk in trying to understand my students is that I care about them, and those students who need the most, need more than I can give. I have memorized the phone number for campus counseling services, and I sometimes dial it and hand the phone to a student or advisee. While I do "friend" students on Facebook, I do not give out my home telephone number. This is obviously a "your mileage may vary" issue; I know many of my colleagues set different boundaries than I do, but having some boundaries, whatever they may be, is critical.

Review of James Davidson's *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Bold New Exploration of the Ancient World*. Random House, 2007, xxxiv and 789 pages. \$45.00

### **Mega kakon, mega biblion**

Say what you will about the substance and tone of James Davidson's *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Bold New Exploration of the Ancient World*--call it glib, facile, too clever by half, self-indulgent, reckless in its treatment of evidence--there is no denying it a certain gravitas: at 789 pages, this is one mega biblion. And it has its origin in what Davidson perceives as a mega kakon: scholars' often deliberate failure to understand the nature of Greek Love. This has two major components: first, the assumption that Greek Love was essentially a "form of organized pedophilia" (xxviii); second, that classicists have become "strangely preoccupied with sodomitical penetration" (xxxiv), and that this focus on acts has led to a denial that the Greeks had anything resembling our notion of sexuality, or any same-sex relations that were other than purely physical.

No work of scholarship can properly begin without an outline of the history of the question, and in particular the need (real or imagined) for the current work to correct past misconceptions, or to examine heretofore unexamined aspects of the subject at hand. It's customary to grant some leeway to a scholar making such claims--"few scholars have examined" might actually mean "only nine, and some of them writing in German"--and since the practice goes back as far as Phaedrus in the Symposium, claiming that Eros has received little praise, it's a time-honored tradition, and we shouldn't be overly picky about such matters. D., however, goes a bit beyond the norm in justifying his work, delving into the motivations of the scholars whose work he opposes, in fact titling an entire section of his book (Chapters 4-6) "Sodomania." In this he suggests that the work of classicists (K.J. Dover in particular) is "remarkably obsessed" with specific sexual acts, and laments the success that such narrowly focused readings of Greek Love have had. In a remarkably candid passage, D. asserts that if Dover's work had

been less well received (particularly by Michel Foucault) “I, perhaps, would not have had to write such a confrontational book” (158). For this book is exceptionally confrontational, and goes far beyond the normal rules of evidence in bringing in scholars’ private lives and their personal and scholarly ties with others. More about that below; first, we should examine a part of D.’s strategy that is even less honorable.

In Chapter 2, “Grace, Sex, and Favors,” D. discusses the language of insults as part of his attempt to show that scholars have habitually oversexualized the Greek world. He takes on three different terms--*euruprōktos*, *kinaidos*, and *katapugōn*--to show that they are either less sexual than generally thought; or if sexual, not intended to insult or mock those who are recipients of anal sex. “If we gave any credence to the invective we would have to assume a vast array of sexual encounters in which (adult men) regularly bent over to be pleased by...by whom? In fact, when you read a little more carefully, and less imaginatively, rather different, more straightforward and sometimes quite surprising meanings, as if by magic, appear.” (One might quibble here that we would have to assume not the reality of such sexual encounters, but their ability to convey shame even as imaginary constructs; but given what follows, this would be a small point indeed.) D. then immediately proceeds to give a new reading of *euruprōktos*, asking “What might provoke you, sitting there in the twenty-first century, to call someone ‘a wide-arse’? It took me ten years to get it, but the joke now seems completely obvious. A clue: Put aside, if you can, for a while, all thoughts of buggery” (57).

I tried my best to do so (I’m a straight man, and D. knows how hard it is for my ilk to stop thinking about ‘buggery,’ but his manner, at once confessional and gently hectoring, convinced me to make the attempt). I read, not without sympathy, his presentation of the evidence that *euruprōktos* might mean something more directly related to oratory and political discourse--that it “is simply a vulgar form of the word ‘wide-mouth,’ *eurustomos*.” His conclusion--the famous passage from *Clouds*, in which Stronger Argument and Weaker Argument agree that prosecutors, tragedians, and politicians are all “*euruprōktoi*”--had me, on first reading, all but convinced. I hadn’t, after all, thought about the evidence for the literal meaning of *euruprōktos* in many years; could it perhaps be one of those pieces of common knowledge (salt in Carthage’s furrows; the Chinese curse about interesting times) that turn out to be false?

But then I did a comprehensive search (so easy in this day and age!) for the uses of *euruprōktos*, and found that it occurs two more times in the *Clouds*: oddly enough, in lines immediately preceding and following those quoted by D. In 1083 (D. starts his paraphrase at 1085) Stronger Argument asks “What if (an adulterer) taking your advice gets radished and plucked? Will he have some argument for claiming not to be *euruprōktos*?” Then at 1095-1100, Stronger takes a look at the audience, finding them to be mostly *euruprōktoi*, going on to pick out several audience members as examples, including one who is *komētēs* (long-haired), a term used earlier in the play in an apparently pederastic context. D.’s argument--that *euruprōktos* has no connection to having an anus physically widened--is made by ignoring a direct statement that someone becomes *euruprōktos* by having something thrust up his ass. (And, what is highly likely as well, that audience members are “fucked,” either literally or figuratively.)

This is not merely tendentiousness (D. displays that elsewhere in abundance), nor deliberate selection of evidence most favorable to one’s case; it is outright, deliberate deception. (His acknowledgment a dozen pages later of “anal dilation” as a secondary connotation of *euruprōktos*, with reference to “radishing,” is hardly exculpatory, since it shows his familiarity with the larger passage from which he so precisely excerpted.) The intended audience for this book--which includes the general public as well as non-specialist academics--will likely lack the ability to check the original sources, and will see no particular reason to ferret out the whole passage which D. excerpts. They will believe what he says about *euruprōktoi*, and wonder why the poor, benighted scholars who preceded him failed to see the plain

truth. Nor is once enough for D. to make his point: he repeats himself at 134-35, reminding us that “obsess(ion) with flagitious anal penetration” has in this case “blinded people to the most obvious truths.”

Why go to such lengths, why risk being caught cheating, for the definition of a single word? This sleight of hand turns out to be a necessary part of D.’s attempt to expunge from his account of Greek love all references to defined roles, domination, and power, to claim that the by now standard view of erastai and erōmenoi as active and passive is a distortion, more suggestive of “a sadomasochistic sex club in 1970s San Francisco” than of the realities of Greek life (xxviii). He cautions that we, inhabitants of a “fuck-you’ culture,” (707n32) may be projecting our own “dismal images” of the power-penetration metaphor onto the Greeks: “In fact, so far as I can tell from the Oxford English Dictionary, the ubiquitous use of the language of sex to indicate aggression or humiliation is a recent phenomenon, going as far back as 1700, perhaps, in one or two cases, but above all a phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century...It may be that it is the mere ‘obscenity’ of the word ‘fuck’ that allowed it to substitute for damn, ‘Damn you!’ simply as another forbidden word...and it was only as a consequence of its place in discourse that its referent, i.e., sex, came to be seen as itself a violent and aggressive act” (143, and accompanying endnote on p.663).

It is hard to know whether to class this as stunningly naive, deliberately deceptive, or merely tententious. D.’s claim that Greek lacks words for sexual aggression (except those imagined by Dover) is easily falsifiable, beginning with the continuation of the Clouds passage he’s so fond of, when Stronger Argument addresses his opponents as kinoumenoi “fucked men.” D. must ignore this, as he must also ignore a wide variety of other evidence, including: the aggression implicit in the Cologne Epode (which he cites elsewhere for its use of *menos*); the aggressive sexual banter in Theocritus; the threats expressed by Priapos (and perhaps implied by the Herms); and much of the Catullan corpus, particularly Poem 16. (Catullus isn’t Greek, of course, but his insults, like the rest of his poetry, are steeped in Greek culture: the end of 15 shows that he knew what a radish was for, and of his terms of abuse toward Furius and Aurelius, 3 of the 4 are borrowed from Greek, the exception being *irrumare*. “*Irummatio*,” as Quintilian might well have said, “*tota nostra est.*”) For that matter, consider the aggression and competitiveness so omnipresent in Greek popular morality; the power relations inherent in men’s domination of women--does D. think that Greek men suddenly abandoned these habits of being when confronted with youthful male beauty? Nor does D., ever ready to suggest analogies with modern attitudes and practices, ever mention the words “top” or “bottom,” a dichotomy so pervasive in modern parlance that the question “Top or bottom?” came as a preloaded text option on my cell phone. But this, of course, might cause modern readers to experience a shock of recognition (rather than scratching their heads) when confronted with Dover’s view of erastai and erōmenoi as active and passive, a reaction that would hardly suit D.’s purposes.

An ever bigger omission: nowhere does D. inform his readers of the assumption, nearly universally held in the ancient world, that adult males typically desire to have sex both with women and with young men. This is, in fact, the main reason that inquiries into Greek sexuality proceeded the way they have: that the sexual systems of the Greeks did not seem to fit the categories we have come to accept as natural in the modern world. D. would trace Foucault’s work directly to Dover’s obsession with sodomy, suggesting it’s an unfortunate consequence, almost an accident, and in so doing grants himself a victory in the Constructionist-Essentialist debate by denying the very premises upon which the Constructionist argument is based. In addition, the simplification of the Greeks’ multi-faceted sexuality allows D. to apply to individuals the word “gay” without fear of complication or contradiction, thereby greatly facilitating many of his arguments, particularly those about long-term pair-bonding.

### **There's No Place Like Home (repeat as needed)**

D.'s suggestion that the true meaning of *euruprōktos* will appear "as if by magic" is true in ways he probably does not consciously intend, for much of the book operates via magical thinking. We've already seen his attempt to use vanishing charms on evidence that contradicts his position; we'll soon see his conjuring of bogeymen (sodomaniacs and homophobes and Nazis--oh, my!) to frighten the general public, and not a few scholars as well; but here it's worth noting his use of incantatory repetition: say it often enough, and you can make it true!

The most obvious use of incantation is in D.'s treatment of the legal situation concerning access to (and sex with) young men. It has been noted by other reviewers that he makes claims that are dubious at best: that sex with boys under eighteen was illegal in Athens; that slightly older youths (*neaniai*; *meirakia*) were habitually barred by law from contact with *paides* in the gymnasium; and that, due to a shift in the age of puberty, the downy-cheeked youths who were the object of so much attention were in fact eighteen and over. Yet the repetition of these claims as fact suffuses the book: already on p.32 he refers to Eighteens and under-Eighteens, even before he has defined the age class system of Athens. It is here that the incantatory magic is strongest: by translating terms into English, he constantly reminds the reader of the alleged age-based laws of Athens--we hear about not *paides*, but Eighteens, and under-Eighteens (and Striplings, and Cadets--so falsely precise, so annoying with their coyness and glaring capitals), and so we're reminded of the supposed moral uprightness of the Greeks; whereas the word *paides* might make us think less savory thoughts about them.

D. has already had some dust-ups with his critics (especially those who are aligned with NAMBLA) about the historical accuracy and implicit politics of his attempts to free Greek Love from the taint of pedophilia. He maintains that the Greeks nobly kept their hands off under-Eighteens (admiration was fine--look but don't touch--and for the boys the motto was Just Say No, as one of his more fanciful sections is entitled). To make this point, D. shifts the age of puberty upward by about four years (which he accomplishes by passing over in silence most ancient medical testimony, ignoring the implications of the marriage age for girls, then presenting highly selective and/or misinterpreted pieces of evidence, including the age at which three specific individuals--one of them D. himself--began shaving). There is, however, an implication of this that I believe has not yet been remarked upon. Let's grant *arguendo* D.'s claims that puberty arrived in males around age 18, and that this was the age at which they legally became potential sexual partners for men. Thus for the Greeks it was not merely a custom, but an actual matter of law that young men became available for sex as soon as they reached puberty--which translated to modern terms would be the equivalent of having sex with 12- or 14-year-olds. So rather than rescuing Greek pederasty, D.'s elaborate legal construct actually moves it uncomfortably close to pedophilia (if not entirely across that line). Once we've done the math on this, we realize that every capitalized "Eighteen" staring up at us from the printed page either implicitly condemns the Greeks for loving boys most of us consider underage; or, by showing that such love was noble, beautiful, and beneficial to society, makes a pro-NAMBLA argument of surprising subtlety and elegance.

### **Putting the homo in ad hominem**

When a section of a book is entitled "Sodomania," overheated rhetoric should come as no surprise; nor does D. disappoint. "It is hard to convey to general readers the pervasiveness of anal sex in the work of classicists today, most of them happily married men whose knowledge of sodomy tends to be the kind you get from books or dim rememberings of reckless nights at boarding school" (119). It is, in fact, hard to convey this--not, of course, as D. implies, because no rational person would believe the actually existing pervasiveness; but because there simply is no pervasiveness of the sort he claims. Take



Dover's *Greek Homosexuality*: a glance through the index reveals approximately 17 pages in which "copulation, anal" is discussed--this out of a total of more than 200 pages, in a book whose explicit purpose is to describe Greek sexual behavior and attitudes. Nor is there a particular obsession in other works I have read. Rather, D. wishes to characterize his opponents' concern with what sexual practices the Greeks actually engaged in as a prurient interest; and this by way of intimidating counter-argument. D. argues at length that the word *erōs*, while not suggesting chastity, is usually something more akin to "longing" instead of "desire"; and that *erastai*, rather than being active partners in a sexual relationship (of whatever duration, which may or may not include something we would recognize as "love"), are often instead merely "lovesick admirers," a sort of fan club for boys who will remain out of reach (often because of their age). I, like many other classicists, disagree with D. on these points; yet surely we should be able to do so without being accused of obsession, or having our sexuality attacked. It's clever enough, and worth a laugh; but really quite petty and childish--although, I have to admit, thoroughly Greek: Aeschines would be proud. (And just for the record: Halperin, Foucault, Winkler, and many other pioneering scholars of sexuality were hardly "happily married men"; "sodomy" is often practiced by straight men, straight women, and lesbians; and it's the sexual practices of lesbians that straight men are obsessed with, not those of gay men.)

Of course, there are worse things than having your sexual experiences, interests, and credentials called into question: you could be accused of anti-Semitism and homophobia. D. continues his attack on Dover via direct (if generally superficial and inaccurate) criticism of his work, but ultimately finds it more useful to resort to biographical criticism (a task made unfortunately far too easy by Dover's 1994 memoir *Marginal Comment*, which contains plenty of fodder for speculation about the connection between his life and his views on sexuality). And while Dover seems to be, by 1978 standards, fair-minded, liberal, not besmirched by anti-gay prejudice, D. is able to dwell on one potentially troubling statement in the preface to *Greek Homosexuality*, in which Dover says he would prefer to call Greek homosexuality "pseudo-sexual" or "quasi-sexual." (While the phrase, borrowed from Dover's semi-collaborator George Devereux, does reflect the latter's anti-gay prejudice, D.'s attempt to show its negative effect on Dover's work is unconvincing. An effective treatment of the implications of the term would have to consider its implication that Greek same-sex behavior was not based on orientation, since Greeks assumed that it was readily compatible with opposite-sex behavior; this, as noted above, is an area D. wishes to avoid discussing.)

But again, it could be worse. Chapter 6 traces the history of anthropology in an attempt to discredit Constructionist theories of sexuality, largely by showing the alleged weaknesses of the Structuralist and Post-Structuralist theories from which they arose. The tone of the chapter may be inferred from its conclusion: Saussure, the father of structuralism ("in which the actual elements, the sounds of words, are unimportant") is taken to task for his public reference to the Jews of Paris as "swarms of parasites." Fair enough, yet D. continues: "He may indeed have been in denial about the substance of sounds as Foucault was in denial about the substance of his homosexuality. For the Aryan quasi-consonants Saussure avoided voicing were not any old letters, but the throaty 'laryngeals' typical of Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Arabic, the ones you find in Colonel Ghhadaffi and Qhhatar and al-Qhhaeda, the letters that framed the root of prehistoric *erōs*: Khhergghh...Perhaps it is just a coincidence that the sound anti-Semitic Saussure could not voice was a Semitic-sounding one, or perhaps he was trying to keep the parasitic Jewish swarms away from the Aryans" (203-4). What sort of response could be mustered to such creative, rambling, ad hominem speculation? D. seems to have created a new category of invective: guilt by free association.

## The New New Criticism

A colleague suggested to me, à propos of this book, that there's a new style of criticism afoot: simply take everything an author says at face value. After getting on the bandwagon by deciding to take her claim at face value, I began to view D. as a pioneer of this new movement, which I've dubbed The New New Criticism. The old New Criticism sought to turn away from the excesses of the past, from historical and biographical speculation about the author, and focus instead on the text itself, on the creation of meaning via the interplay of words and images within the text. The New New Criticism seeks to narrow the focus even further, by purging from the interpretive process such complicating factors as irony, nuance, and context.

Cases in point: when Aeschines says he will pass over Timarchus' youthful activities, that there should be an amnesty for such things, D. puts aside all thoughts of praeteritio and sees this as evidence that underage sex was unsuitable for public discussion (97-98). Nor should Aristophanes' suggestion in the Symposium that "the Athenian political class (is) entirely dominated, apparently, by born homosexuals" be thrown out of court as a "mere 'tongue-in-cheek' allusion" (159). Most importantly of all, the speech of Pausanias in the Symposium should be treated as a historical document for Athenian sexual practices (519-25)--other critics may insist on its ironies (that Pausanias is describing himself and Agathon, rather than typical Athenian practice; that its jokes about Elian and Boiotian inarticulateness cannot be taken seriously; that its apparent praise for the Athenians' complex system is in fact intended as a humorously specious justification of a sexual double standard). Yet by casting irony aside, D. provides us with valuable historical data we might not otherwise have: information on gymnasium rules, and even a possible law or custom that an erastēs could not be removed from the doorstep of his erōmenos. Of even greater import are the speech's implications for Elis:

"Once more, it is not by dismissing the sources as gossip and rumor, or propagandistic fictions, but by taking them more seriously and more literally, that we will discover apparently inconsistent pieces of the puzzle...fitting together most neatly. According to Pausanias, remember, in Plato's Symposium, in Boeotia and Elis: 'It has been straightforwardly laid down by law [haplōs nenomothetētai] that it is beautiful to graciously gratify erastai, and no man, neither young nor ancient would/could say that it was ugly.'

"In other words in these cities it was illegal to say that homosexual sex was not beautiful" (438; italics in original).

Thus we see the productivity of the New New Critical approach: the discovery of laws whose existence had hitherto gone unsuspected. We are lucky indeed that such a proudly gay author is willing to play the straight man for the sake of advancing our knowledge of the ancient world.

## Only Connect

The New New Criticism, valuable as it has proven to be, can only function when there is a narrowly defined pre-existing context; what happens when there is no ready-made context, when far-flung sources must be pulled together and analyzed? Here D. follows a method that might be dubbed Free Association Football: take pieces of data that may seem unrelated, but chain them together in whatever way strikes your fancy, prizing possibility and connection and association over the constraints posed by more mundane interpretive rules. Chapters 7-12, which deal in large part with myth and ritual, are especially fertile ground for this method (although Chapter 15's treatment of the Peithinos Vase also deserves mention). I'll restrict myself to two examples:

In Chapter 9, D. discusses at length the worship of Hyacinthus at Sparta, including his association with Zephyr, claiming that a particular vase depicts Hyacinthus' catasterism. He continues by speculating what sex with a god would really be like, then suggests that a fragment of a cup by Douris, which ap-

parently represents the couple having sex while Hyacinthus is wearing a cloak, in fact reflects a Spartan custom in which boys always kept their cloaks on, even during sex with men. “Now perhaps we would prefer to leave the scene, but we have to put delicacy aside and picture to ourselves what happens next: a spatter of white droplets onto fabric” (308). He then makes a connection with Erechtheus, and also Orion, both catasterized heroes born from divine semen spilled on the ground; then segues into a discussion of the cosmology of the Derveni Papyrus, in which “[Zeus] swallowed down the penis which first ejaculated the aither.” His conclusion: “(Intercrural sex) could only produce one result when satisfaction was reached and the rubbing stopped, leaving the rubbed one with a little constellation of his own. Any Spartan who happened to find himself in the potteries of the Ceramicus and saw Zephyrus hovering while having sex through the cloak with Hyacinthus, and who also remembered that Hyacinthus on his tomb was being led up to the stars, would surely be able to make the connection” (310).

Surely. Especially the part derived from Egyptian cosmogony.

D.’s treatment of Achilles and Patroclus is also worth a quick glance. In Chapter 10 he rehearses for the general reader the plot of the Iliad and the intensity of the bond between the two, including the rather scant evidence for a physical relationship between them (the story of Meleager and Cleopatra; the phrase *gynaiki per* in Book 18. He omits, of course, Achilles’ claims to love Briseis, and the fact that he and Patroclus are both portrayed sleeping beside women in Book 9.). There is a foreshadowing here of a later bout of free association football: his treatment of the phrase *potheōn androtēta te kai menos ēu*, which he translates “longing for Patroclus’s manliness and spunk,” pointing out that the specific meaning “semen” was established with the discovery of the Cologne Epode. (The notion that Thetis would use such a directly anatomical and colloquial term out of the blue bespeaks a serious tone-deafness as regards Homeric style, but that’s a quibble.) Some pages later, he discusses the Sosias Cup, suggesting that Achilles and Patroclus seem to have no reference to the outside world “not even looking at anything that lies outside the frame,” and goes on to suggest, then reject, the possibility that the arrow wounding Patroclus must have come from outside the frame. (His speculation about the closed world inhabited by the pair mixes different orders of reality in a way that leaves me wondering how the heroes themselves managed to get inside the frame.) Nothing comes from without, D. concludes: using the myth of Telephus’ wounding by Achilles, he suggests that “it would occur to any Greek viewing this scene, I think, that the painter was alluding to friendly fire” (327).

Basic principles of myth and iconographic interpretation go by the boards; but it gets worse. An epigram in Thebes launches D. into a discussion of *menos*: thinking of Phaedrus’ claim in the Symposium that Eros can breathe *menos* into fighters, it is “impossible not also to recall that image of Achilles and Patroclus on the Sosias Cup...Eros has breathed *menos* into Patroclus and soon, ‘bold in the love of youths’ and of one *kouros* in particular, Achilles, he will go out to fight in full berserk mode, inspired by that *menos* that is white sperm in Archilochus’s description of himself ejaculating into the daughter of his political enemy, or ‘what is whitest and brightest’ ejaculated from the phallus of Heaven in the Derveni Papyrus to produce the stars, *menos* as white and bright as the bandages Achilles applies to his *erastēs*, and that stands out vividly in Patroclus’s gritted teeth. You think I am getting carried away? I don’t.”

One would hate to see D. on an occasion when he thinks he actually is getting carried away. It would be tempting to speculate, given D.’s fantasies about other scholars’ sexual obsessions, what his own is; but I’ll hold back.

### **Not even wrong**

Many of the claims made by D. are demonstrably wrong; many others, in the words of physicist Wolfgang Pauli, are “not even wrong,” either being so far off topic or so completely speculative and un-

falsifiable as to render concepts like “truth” and “probability” utterly irrelevant. Yet is there anything of value in this book?

Yes, almost certainly; but how could we tell? First, the length of the book not only makes a cover-to-cover reading difficult, but its prolixity is a problem even when reading individual sections: D. goes on at great length about anything that interests or amuses him, or that might be ever so slightly relevant, which makes it hard at times to figure out precisely what his argument might be. While it is easy to chalk this up to lack of self-restraint (and lack of editorial restraint as well), I have to wonder if the volume’s very volubility is not itself a discursive strategy. If you say something often enough, it can seem true; and if you say many, many things about a topic, it can seem as if you’ve been exhaustive (rather than merely exhausting). If the author goes on for pages about “The Girl From Ipanema,” surely it’s because he’s covered all the more immediately relevant evidence.

The book’s style also presents a barrier. I love clever allusions and puns and incongruous modern parallels as much as the next scholar (okay, as much as the next four or five scholars put together), yet I find D.’s style annoying, at times even repulsive. Chattiness is all very well and good, except when it indicates condescension and rudeness to one’s fellow scholars (and, not infrequently, readers). It’s a popular book, and D.’s efforts to avoid an overly dry academic style are successful; and at times I’ve found him quite amusing. The use of slang, of course, risks producing a book that will age quickly and seem dated; yet D. has cleverly avoided this pitfall by using slang (“getting jiggy”; “doing the do”) which is already out of date. (“So 1998!”, as one of my students said.) Of course, it can be hard to tell when he’s being serious and when he’s being ironic: surely his frequent use of “buggery” and “sodomy” must be ironic, even when he seems to be using them in his own voice, with no obvious motive to be cute. Surely?

With so many arguments in this book, so many original observations, some of them must be worth a second look, and some of them will no doubt stand up to that closer scrutiny. The problem is this: since we know that D. is capable of slanting the playing field, and even deliberately concealing evidence that contradicts his position, how do we evaluate any of his claims? Scholarship typically (not always, but typically) rests on a certain bedrock level of trust, and if a scholar has done a certain amount of legwork in assembling and interpreting data, I normally feel that I can evaluate her arguments without going back and checking every minor detail, looking to see if some vital piece of information has been left out. Since it’s impossible to trust James Davidson in this way, each and every claim that he makes must be verified by starting at square one, checking original sources and their contexts, making sure that his characterization of other scholars’ work bears at least some recognizable correspondence to what they actually said and meant. And if we have to make that extraordinary effort to assess his claims, then why on earth would we bother? Playing with someone who refuses to play by the rules, and calls me names besides, is one childish thing I am more than willing to put away.

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*If you have an idea for an article or the name of a book which should be reviewed, please contact Keely Lake (klake@wayland.org).*

\*Call for Papers: Transgressive Spaces in Classical Antiquity\*

Lambda Classical Caucus Panel, APA Seattle (2013)

Organizers:

Sarah Levin-Richardson, Rice University (slr@rice.edu)

& Lauri Reitzammer, University of Colorado at Boulder (reitzammer@colorado.edu)

What spaces in Greek and Roman antiquity were used for gender and sexual transgression? By what means were everyday spaces transformed into places that welcomed going beyond or challenging normative gender and sexual expectations, and violating gender and sexual boundaries considered fixed and non-negotiable? Is there a spatial topography for individuals who embody non-normative gender roles or sexual practices? In what ways could “deviant” spaces affect or “infect” daily life?

Dramatic spaces in Athens permitted the audience to step beyond the constraints of reality into a realm where, for example, women could stop a war by means of a sex-strike, or where male viewers could temporarily feel emotions not commonly allowed. The wilds of Mt. Cithaeron, at least as imagined by classical Athenians, encouraged ecstatic or enthused participants to cross out of the constraints imposed by the human sphere. The Roman amphitheater lauded male gladiators whose wounds violated norms of impenetrable masculinity, and the triumphal route found soldiers calling attention to the non-normative sexual deeds of their generals.

This panel explores the roles of space--including ritual space, dramatic space, landscapes, and architectural space--in gender and sexual transgressions. This focus on spatial aspects is intended to bring the analysis of transgression into the realm of lived experience, and to investigate the influence of built and natural environments on daily life and cultural practices.

We welcome papers that draw on various approaches, including literary, socio-cultural, archaeological, art-historical, and theoretical. Please send abstracts that follow the APA's guidelines for individual abstracts ([http://apaclassics.org/index.php/annual\\_meeting/program\\_guide\\_details/types\\_of\\_submissions\\_and\\_related\\_instructions/](http://apaclassics.org/index.php/annual_meeting/program_guide_details/types_of_submissions_and_related_instructions/)) by email to Prof. Deborah Kamen (dkamen@uw.edu), **not to the panel organizers**, by \*February 1, 2012\*. Please do not identify yourself anywhere in the abstract, as submissions will be blind refereed.

*Available for review*

\*William Loader's *Sexuality in the New Testament* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010)

\*Alastair Blanshard's *Sex: Vice and Love from Antiquity to Modernity* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)

*Please contact Keely Lake (klake@wayland.org) if you are interested and, in good BMCR style, please disclose any previous relationship with the author. It is hoped that the review would be ready for publication in the February issue.*