

IRIS
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Rehak Award Winner 2009

David D. Leitao, of San Francisco State University, was awarded the Lambda Classical Caucus' annual Paul Rehak Award for his article, "Male Improvisation in the Cult of Eileithyia on Paros," in M. Parca and A. Tzanetou, eds., *Finding Persephone: Women's Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007) 252-76. The Rehak Award honors the best article or book chapter pertaining to the LCC mission published within the past three years.



Maryline Parca, accepting the Rehak Award
on behalf of David D. Leitao

LCC/WCC Party 2009

In conjunction with this year's LCC panel, "Rethinking Homosexual Behavior in Antiquity," the theme for the LCC/WCC party was "Courtesans and Fishcakes"!



Many more photos, including an archive of past LCC/WCC parties, can be found at <http://faculty.washington.edu/dkamen/LCCpix.shtml>.

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Letter From the Outgoing Graduate Student Representative

I am proud to report that the second annual Lambda Classical Caucus and Women's Classical Caucus graduate student cocktail hour at the APA/AIA was a rousing success, introducing close to a dozen new graduate students to our organizations and membership. LCC programming geared towards graduate students and initiated by graduate students has increased dramatically as well. This year's APA/AIA witnessed a Queer Theory Roundtable (for more on the roundtable, see p. 3) that was designed to facilitate discussion between graduate students and faculty, and the 17 attendees were in fact split nearly evenly between the two groups. Moreover, John P. Wood, a graduate student from the University of Missouri, will be co-organizing with Professor Konstantinos Nikoloutsos (Florida Atlantic University) the 2011 LCC panel, also on Queer Pedagogy.

Finally, as one of my last official acts as Graduate Student Representative, I put forward a motion to implement an annual LCC Graduate Student Paper Prize, which was heartily approved at the LCC business meeting. Our hope with this prize is to encourage LCC-related scholarship from younger scholars, so if you have seen an outstanding graduate student paper on an LCC-related topic at the APA/AIA or another conference, please nominate!

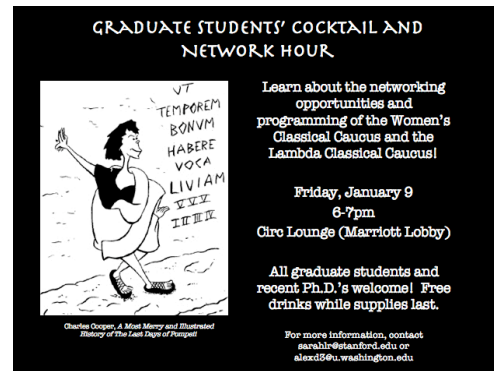
Respectfully Submitted,



Sarah Levin-Richardson
Graduate Student Representative

New Graduate Student Representative

The new Graduate Student Representative of the Lambda Classical Caucus is **Naomi Campa** of the University of Washington.



Flier for the 2009 LCC/WCC
graduate students' cocktail hour

Announcing the New LCC Grad Student Paper Award

Did you see an amazing graduate student paper at the APA/AIA addressing queer issues? Please consider nominating! This year we are proud to announce a new award for graduate students: The LCC Graduate Student Paper Award.

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, 2008 to June 30, 2009 (ca. 20 minutes in length as delivered). To nominate, e-mail Kristina Milnor (kmilnor@barnard.edu) and Bryan Burns (bburns@wellesley.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 **September 1, 2009**. The winner will be announced at the 2010 WCC/LCC opening night reception at the APA/AIA.

2009 APA/AIA LCC Queer Theory Roundtable

This year marked the first-ever LCC roundtable! Co-organized by Sarah Levin-Richardson and Konstantinos Nikoloutsos, the roundtable was devoted to Queer Theory and Classics. Below are some of the main questions and issues we addressed.

What is queer theory?

We concluded that queer theory both encompasses LGBT issues and constitutes an epistemological approach. It is not just a history of sexuality, although that is one facet of it.

Whose “queer” is it, anyway?

We discussed whether queer theory should address issues that are “queer” in antiquity or “queer” to us. So, for instance, heterosexual oral sex, while not queer to us, *was* considered queer in antiquity. On the flip side, it was argued that pederasty, for instance, was not queer in the ancient world (although we acknowledged that pederastic relations *could* be queer, if, for example, there was a role reversal between *erastes* and *eromenos*). We concluded that there is power to be gained from recovering or examining things that are queer to us now, even if they were not considered queer in antiquity.

Does queer theory have to be only about sex?

No. Queer theory might be used to think about whatever was considered transgressive in ancient society, whether it was sexual or not: so, e.g., being “too Persian,” or the removal from society entailed by hermitage. We proposed that queer theory’s focus on the performative aspects of identity and social hierarchy might be used to talk about marginal groups like slaves.

How can we incorporate queer theory into teaching?

We discussed the fact that queer theory can be scary for students. There are two main reasons for this: the word “queer” and the word “theory”! One possibility is to do and teach queer theory without *calling* it queer theory. Another possibility is to be

unapologetic about one’s use of queer theory and to have students jump right in. In addition, we can do queer theory by talking not only about sex but also (or alternatively) about the Other/marginal groups. (This is particularly important in secondary schools, where issues of sexuality are very sensitive.) Moreover, we should make clear to students that we always bring our own cultural (and personal) perspective to antiquity. It was pointed out that good teaching, at its best, is “always already queer,” in that it deconstructs categories and reveals social dynamics and hierarchies to students.

What queer theory scholarship are we reading?

Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Alan Sinfield, among others.

Which classical scholars are using queer theory?

Some the scholars we named were Craig Williams, Maud Gleason, Erik Gunderson, Simon Goldhill, Helen Morales, and Page duBois.

Should we come out as LGBT or queer in the classroom?

The consensus was essentially “yes,” but in the same way that straight teachers “come out” in daily conversation (e.g. “my wife and I...”). It was suggested that by breaking traditional classroom expectations (including in areas such as dress, comportment, lecturing style, etc), we can help “queer” the classroom.

Should we be “out” as queer theorists on the job market?

Yes. There’s a process of mutual self-selection that goes on: religious schools, for instance, may not be interested in queer theorists, just as a queer theorist may not be interested in teaching at a religious school. It is certainly the case, however, that some schools may be more responsive to having people *research* queer theory than *teach* queer theory; one needs to gauge the situation appropriately.

(compiled by SLR and DK)

Rehak Fund Donors 2005-2008

The Lambda Classical Caucus offers heartfelt thanks to all those who have contributed to the Rehak Award Fund (many of them regular or repeat donors). Special mention should go to John Younger, whose initial gift made the Award possible, and to the two Rehak Award winners who donated their prize money back to the fund: Mark Masterson and Konstantinos Nikoloutsos. If your name should be on this list and is not, we apologize—please let us know (blondell@u.washington.edu)!

Norman Austin	Greg Jones	Cashman Kerr Prince
Sinclair Bell	Deborah Kamen	John Rundin
Jorge Bravo	Carolyn Koehler	Alan Shapiro
Alice Browne	Leslie Kurke	Marilyn Skinner
Vern Bullough	Andrew Lear	Niall Slater
Joy Connolly	Janet Martin	Stephen Smith
Lillian Doherty	Mark Masterson	Andrew Szegedy-Maszak
Walter Donlan	Barbara McManus	Dan Tompkins
Nikolai Endres	Michael Mordine	Bella Vivante
Chris Faraone	Betty Rose Nagle	Susan Wiltshire
Nancy Felson	Christopher Nappa	John Wood
Jeri Fogel	Konstantinos	Cecil Wooten
Barbara Gold	Nikoloutsos	John Younger
Ralph Hexter	Eugene O'Connor	
Peter Holliday	Maryline Parca	
Yurie Hong	Robert Pounder	

New Books of Interest by LCC Members

Kirk Ormand, *Controlling Desires: Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009.

- Ch. 1: Introduction
- Ch. 2: Homer, Hesiod, and Greek Lyric Poetry
- Ch. 3: Sexual Roles and Sexual Rules in Classical Athens
- Ch. 4: Sexuality in Greek Comedy
- Ch. 5: Legal and Illegal Sex
- Ch. 6: Philosophical Sex
- Ch. 7: Love and Sex in Hellenistic Poetry
- Ch. 8: Rome and Roman Sex
- Ch. 9: Roman Comic Sex
- Ch.10: Legal and Illegal Sex in Ancient Rome
- Ch. 11: Roman Poetry about Love and/or Sex
- Ch. 12: Excursus: Lesbians in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
- Ch. 13: Imperial Sex: Nero and Seneca
- Ch. 14: Sex in Satire and Invective Poetry
- Ch. 15: Epilogue

Ruby Blondell, ed., *Queer Icons from Greece and Rome = Helios 35.2* (2008).

Ruby Blondell, "Introduction"

Bryan Burns, "Sculpting Antinous"

Jody Valentine, "Lesbians are from Lesbos: Sappho and Identity Construction in *The Ladder*"

Mark Nugent, "From 'Filthy Catamite' to 'Queer Icon': Elagabalus and the Politics of Sexuality (1960-1975)"

H. Christian Blood, "The Trouble with Icons: Recent Ideological Appropriations of Plato, *Symposium*"

Konstantinos P. Nikoloutsos, "The *Alexander* Bromance: Male Desire and Gender Fluidity in Oliver Stone's Historical Epic"

Book Review

Giulia Sissa, *Sex and Sensuality in the Ancient World*, trans. George Staunton.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Nikolai Endres

Giulia Sissa is Professor of Classics at UCLA. She has published *Greek Virginity*, *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods* (with Marcel Detienne), *Le Plaisir et le mal: Philosophie de la drogue*, and *L'Ame est un corps de femme*. In her most recent study, a translation of *Eros tiranno: Sessualità e sensualità nel mondo antico* (2003), she looks at sensuality and sexual desire in the Greek, Roman, and early Christian worlds, paying special attention to how modern concepts of sexuality evolved from ancient theories and practices. Sissa argues for the renewed importance of heterosexuality in classical studies, contending that homosexual activity has been over-emphasized. Throughout the volume, she carefully distinguishes between pleasure and desire, and between how men and women were perceived as experiencing erotic feeling. The book is divided into three parts: (1) *Eros the Tyrant*, (2) *Mollis Amor* – Unmanly Love, (3) *Perversa Voluntas* – Deviant Inclination.

In the Introduction, Sissa looks at segregated gender roles and their polarities (hardly news these days). She continues: “Only if we do not forget the body and do not underestimate its symbolic morphology can we hope to understand how the ancients understood sex and how they came to their stubborn essentialism, the constant reference to *being*, or *having become*, woman or man” (4). This constructionist bent established, Sissa then issues a caveat: “We need to abandon the clichéd language of sexuality and start talking about, on the one hand, sex – in order to capture ancient materialism – and, on the other, sensuality – if we are to grasp the full range of attitudes the ancients adopted in relation to *eros*” (6). Then she turns outright poetical:

What is sex? It is the ever magnified difference between two bodies, a difference that irradiates into social habits and cultural artefacts. What is sensuality? It is the moving of those different

bodies towards each other, in the pursuit of pleasure. Sensuality is desire, but desire beyond the crude and instantaneous event of what we might describe as drive, stimulation, reflex, response. Sensuality is indefinite, lingering, persistent desire. It is anguish and delight, want and anticipation, attraction and seduction, rapture and strategy. Sensuality is to feel your erotic emotion and to play with it; to desire and to make yourself desirable. Sensuality is to transform the urges of the body into language – be it poetry, letters, rituals, garments, presents or gestures. Sex morphs into sensuality, with the progressive refinement of that system of distinctions, conventions, performances and signs that we call a civilisation. (7)

In Chapter 1, “Desire,” Sissa focuses on a number of transgressive women. Medea, who appropriates desire rather than attributes it to divine agency (Aphrodite), begins a trend of secularization: “Was this the moment in which love freed itself from the divine and became a human and psychological affair?” (17). She is thus, I would add, a precursor of Racine’s Phèdre, who does not need to do anything devious, for her erotic conflict is inherent in her psyche. Transgressive in a different way is Penelope, for the suitors desire her sensual body more than the throne of Ithaca. Sissa then distinguishes between two consequences of desire: erection and penetration, the latter of which was voluntary and affirmed male power; arousal, though, was unpredictable. Next, we find the dichotomy of desire and pleasure, which Christianity has conflated, but in the Homeric world they were mutually exclusive, with desire lacking its end product, pleasure or, conversely, pleasure killing off desire, hence desire’s “suicidal” nature (37). The distinction became blurred with Hesiod and the creation of Pandora, when desire became unlimited, resulting in an insatiability inherent in the human condition. For Plato, finally, desire is located in the soul, giving it an internal cause and frustrating it eternally: “Whoever ‘enjoys’ is always desiring again, desiring more and desiring something else. They are therefore always lacking and suffering” (45). In a Foucauldian heresy, Sissa then denies that sexual acts constitute the essence of Platonic

ethics; on the contrary, she says, Plato is concerned with desire, not pleasure.

Chapter 2, "Pleasure," moves to the site of the symposium as a hedonistic ritual. Sissa reiterates that for Plato, the problem of pleasure was not its excessiveness but the asymptotic desire that causes and pursues it, and contends with typically Italian eloquence: "regarding erotic pleasure, sexual acts themselves are not the substance of ethics, because what matters is, rather, the risks inherent in *la dolce vita*" (52). She then turns to Aeschines' speech against the passive, effeminate, and unnatural Timarchos and to the *kinaidos*, whose sex life underwent intense scrutiny. Classical Athens did not respect privacy as we understand it. Next is pleasure and *paiderastia*, where Sissa wants to shift the focus from the high-minded world of Plato to a more popular setting, such as the audiences for Aristophanes' comedies or courtroom drama. She ends with the proposition that Diotima's introduction at the end of the *Symposium* was supposed to remind the symposiasts of the other sex and procreation, essentially paving the way for Plato's stand on homosexuality in the *Laws* as *para phusin*, but that leaves out the *Phaedrus* (widely placed as between the two) and its sensuality.

In Chapter 3, "Bodies," Sissa looks at sexual difference, the female body, and the story of Pandora and her snares. As a result of the separation of the genders, sex became hard work, the penis a source of anxiety, and anatomy inverted – all of which is of course paralleled in Christian accounts, such as Genesis and St. Augustine's *City of God*. Here comes another assault on Foucault, who overplayed Artemidorus Daldianus' *Interpretation of Dreams* to reconstruct ancient notions of sex and power. Sissa recommends focusing on the more authoritative Plato (especially the *Timaeus*), Aristotle, Plutarch, and the Stoics. This chapter replicates a lot of information we know from, for example, Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* or Peter Brown's *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*.

Chapter 4, "Relationships," proceeds to how the sexes manage to reconnect and therefore begins with marriage, which the Greeks considered both an erotic joy and a social bond. Reviewing the legal and medical aspects of maternity and paternity, Sissa cautions us not to impose modern stereotypes on the ancient world. (But anyone who has read Aeschylus' *Euменides* knows that.) To counter "spectacular misinterpretations," Sissa insists that the relationship between mother and child was not "natural" but had to be symbolically acknowledged by the father. Another marital problem: the inheritance of a father who dies without a son but with a daughter, which created a conflict between the assumed priority of men over women and the preference for a direct line rather than a collateral one. Athenian law resolved this issue by having the closest male relative (who was also the daughter's legal guardian) marry the fatherless daughter in anticipation of the birth of a male heir. How about relationships in tragedy? Since women's emotions were primarily erotic rather than intellectual or political, the theater offers a place of grandiose female sensuality. Once again, Foucault is criticized here for ignoring the tragic stage in favor of *philosophia* and *paiderastia*. Sissa surveys Clytemnestra's adulterous and murderous passions, Electra's "vindictive virginity," Medea's wifedom and motherhood, Deianeira's unwitting poisoning of Hercules, and Jocasta's blindness to incest (although, to Jocasta's credit, the oracle had only mentioned parricide to Laius). For Oedipus' mother and wife, Sissa uses the French anthropologist Françoise Héritier's broader idea of incest as not only sex between relatives but as a physical bond between people who are in contact with each other *already*, which produces great genealogical turmoil in Sophocles' play.

Part 2 begins with Epicureanism, especially Lucretius' version: "Love is the transformation of a physiological response into a pathological one" (135); eroticism is now cruelty. Not so fast, says Ovid, whose amatory art attempts to make love last against all odds: "The fundamental lesson of the *Art of Love* is that love means suspicion and

jealousy, betrayal and duplicity. It is a fiction and a theatrical exercise” (141); the *Ars Amatoria* became a precursor of urbane courtship that paved the way for 12th-century French chivalry. Under the flip subtitle “Oh dolci baci e morbide carezze” (this is not an untranslated phrase from the original; Sissa’s Italian subtitle here is “pedicabo et inrumabo” – too much for delicate Anglophones?), we meet Juvenal’s Nevolus, hear about his services to his boss who enjoys being penetrated, and arrive at a definition of virility, which had “less to do with power than with a psychosomatic firmness – the very opposite of *mollitia* – which concerned both character and the whole body, including the erect penis” (152). Softness caused anxiety, for while the (male) body grows from soft to hard, society encourages him to soften in his pursuit toward culture. Puberty, therefore, was more complicated for boys because of physiognomy; the dichotomy of penis and anus makes possible two outcomes: virility and passivity. (This topic has now received fuller treatment in James Davidson’s *The Greeks and Greek Love*.) There are a couple of issues here. Sissa speaks of “unreserved approval” of Pausanias’ concept of Celestial Love, but if one looks at its manifestation – base acts such as going on one’s knees in public, swearing vows, or spending a night in front of someone’s door, which are however exalted in a lover – we know that Pausanias’ account is highly untypical (Alcibiades displays that kind of behavior with Socrates – and how far did he get?). And to call this “mutual loving” or an “ethics of reciprocity” (162) is either a bad choice of words (translation is correct here) or simply wrong.

Part 3 discusses the Christian watershed, especially the question of marriage in the Pauline epistles. Sex, for St. Paul, is not inherently negative, only insofar as it distracts from the kingdom of heaven. To have preached universal asceticism would have, literally, put an immediate end to the fledgling Christian community. Paradoxically, though, extremely sensual love now became a metaphor for the intercourse with God: “Attention to God is erotic time. Virginity is a passion” (179). Not until St. Augustine was

marriage uncontroversially recognized as a sacrament.

In the Conclusion, Sissa makes a “final apology” concerning things left out: the ancient novel, Attic comedy, or erotic poetry. She then takes issue with Foucault’s conflation of the confessional and the couch and his great nemesis, psychoanalysis. A complex and theoretical discussion ensues.

The bibliography is terribly sloppy. Foucault’s six volumes of *The History of Sexuality* is wishful thinking; D. Halperin’s title is not *A Hundred Years of Homosexuality*; Froma Zeitlin’s initial is not “E”; one of the editors of *Women in Ancient Societies* is S. Fischler, not Fischier; *The Sleep of Reason* is edited by J. Sihvola and its subtitle is hardly *Exotic Experience... in Ancient Greece and Rome*; French accents are misplaced (“le rêve”) and grammatical agreement is ignored (“rencontre international”); M. Janan’s correct title is *When the Lamp is Shattered: Desire and Narrative in Catullus*; Oklahoma is not a city of publication; R. Wallace’s article is about the concept of citizens’ rights, not right; the punctuation between title and subtitle is erratic.

I started out with the book’s (for our purposes) most intriguing claim: “In contrast to other recent scholars, Sissa emphasizes the centrality of heterosexual desire and passion in the classical period, arguing that the importance of homosexuality has been over-emphasized.” This is actually not in the book but on the dust-jacket – and what a spectacular mismatch! There is nothing that supports that thesis. Still, this is a mostly original volume, delightful to read, well-focused, and filled with fascinating and erudite detail.

We want your news!

If you have recently written a book and would like to see it mentioned in *Iris*, please submit your name and publication details to the Newsletter Editor, Deborah Kamen (dkamen@u.washington.edu).