

Preliminary Program: International Conference on “Classical Greek and Roman Literature: Gendered Perspectives in Reading and Reception”

University of Maryland, College Park

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Research on gender—a term signifying sexual identity, especially in relation to society and culture—has renovated and energized the study of ancient Greek and Roman literature. Both the study of gender in classical antiquity, and the subfield of classical reception, which explores the different ways in which later cultures have reacted to and transformed ancient Greek and Roman texts and materials, have rapidly become burgeoning areas of interdisciplinary inquiry. Foregrounding gender as an analytical category in reading literary works from classical antiquity, and in interpreting later responses to these works, has illuminated ancient Greco-Roman texts and contexts, and subsequent efforts to make those texts meaningful in other contexts for other cultures. It has also helped explain contemporary cultural attitudes and arrangements regarding gender that have been inherited from the classical past.

We have organized this one-day conference in conjunction with the new faculty seminar series for classics affiliates at the University of Maryland, College Park as well as with a series of workshops on women and gender in Latin and classics pedagogy held during the spring 2012 semester. It features a series of presentations by distinguished classical scholars from North America and abroad whose work has provided gendered perspectives on both ancient Greek and Roman literary texts and later responses to these texts; it also highlights the work of UMCP faculty members engaged in classical reception research from the vantage point of many other disciplines: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, history, rhetoric, Byzantine studies, film studies and performance studies. In addition, it showcases the important role played by the arts—poetry and fiction, film and theater—in the realm of classical reception. Both the conference and the workshops honor the scholarship and teaching of Barbara McManus, Professor of Classics Emerita, College of New Rochelle.

The conference has been made possible by funding from the UMCP ADVANCE Project for Inclusive Excellence (itself funded by the National Science Foundation); a Presidential Initiative Grant from the Classical Association of the Atlantic States; and the Departments of Classics and English; the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures; and the College of Arts and Humanities at UMCP. The papers by the twelve presenters in the three panels will be posted in advance on the conference website; each of them will present a 10-minute summary of her paper during the panel itself, followed by a 40-minute question and discussion session.

Schedule of Events

8: 30 AM Welcoming Remarks (Professor Ann Wylie, Geology: UMCP Provost; Professor Bonnie Thornton Dill, Women’s Studies: Dean, College of Arts and

Humanities; Professor Lillian Doherty: Chair, Classics; Professor Avis Cohen, Biology: Director, ADVANCE Program for Inclusive Excellence)

9 AM Keynote Opening Address, “Why is Penelope still Waiting? The missing feminist reappraisal of the *Odyssey* in cinema since 1963,” Professor Edith Hall, Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK

Hall’s paper examines the presentation of Penelope since 1963 in filmic versions of the *Odyssey*, or figures corresponding to her in transpositions of the ancient epic such as *Sommersby* and *Cold Mountain*. She argues that no screenplay nor director has ever done justice to the complexity of Homer’s intelligent heroine, nor has equaled the emotional range and interest of her presentation in the ancient reception of the *Odyssey* in, for example, Ovid’s *Heroides*. It also explores the reasons why there has been such a huge ideological discrepancy between the feminism-influenced new *Odysseys* in fiction, theater and poetry as well as the Classics Academy on the one hand, and those in the cinema on the other.

From the perspective of a female spectator, the 1997 NBC miniseries by Chris Solimine and Andre Konchalovsky is perhaps the most depressing cinematic excursion into ancient Greece ever to have been made. They prevented Penelope from displaying almost any of the emotions or initiative and moral agency for which Penelope’s situation cries out. Yet the Homeric Penelope has some great speeches and dream narratives which reveal some of her inner thoughts, and even she is a good deal tougher and more assertive than the figure produced in Konchalovsky’s version. The potential to make Penelope more interesting was not completely overlooked by earlier film writers and directors, in Mario Camerini’s *Ulisse* (1954), Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Mepris* (*Contempt*, 1963), John Hiller’s comedy *Penelope* (1966), starring Natalie Wood, and Barry Levinson’s baseball epic *The Natural* (1984). Her paper draws on feminist theory, psychoanalysis and the historiography of cinema in order to address the contribution of the female actors cast in these movies, the psychological experience and gender identity of their implicit viewers, and the sexual ideologies at stake in the profit-driven cinema industry.

9:30-9:45 AM Break

9:45 AM Panel on Feminist Scholarship in Classics and the Democratic Turn to Classical Reception

Assistant Professor Melanie Kill, English, UMCP presiding

Discussion of papers by Dr. Joan Burton, Office of the Undergraduate Dean, UMCP; Professor Barbara K. Gold, Hamilton College; Professor Madeleine Henry, Iowa State University; Professor Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, Hamilton College. Each will present a 10-minute summary of the paper she has posted on the conference website; a question and discussion session will follow.

Joan Burton, “Fictive Women in a Christian World”

Burton will investigate the reanimation of the pagan past by Byzantine texts and the rich forum that they make available for exploring issues relating to gender and society in a Christian world. A focal point will be how reviving the Greek literary past enabled

twelfth-century Byzantine narratives to dramatize sexual and gender difference through themes of performance, dance and spectacle.

Barbara K. Gold, “A Woman’s View of War: Simone Weil and the *Iliad*”

Gold will examine the reaction to and interpretation of Homer’s *Iliad* by the philosopher Simone Weil, a social activist, Marxist and ascetic. Weil, who wrote *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*, in 1940 after the fall of her native France to the Nazis, understands the *Iliad* as deeply opposed to war, and sees the idea of force as the work’s “true hero, true subject matter, and narrative center.” Focusing on Weil’s depiction of how force affects human beings, Gold will consider whether Weil’s unique analysis of Homer’s poem can be read as gendered. When Weil looks at the dehumanizing effects of war and death, with their dead broken down into their constituent body parts, she is, in her objectifying of humans on the battlefield, describing them in much the same way that women are often depicted and objectified by male writers; in so doing, Weil’s analysis prefigures later feminist scholarship in the attention it accords to the objectification of female bodies in texts and on screen.

Madeleine M. Henry, “From Female Classicist to Feminist Classicist”

Speaking in the personal voice, Henry will reflect on how her academic training and research projects have shaped her intellectual formation as a feminist scholar in both classical literature and classical reception. Reading the comedies of Menander with W. Thomas MacCary sparked her interest in Greek comedy, but graduate study with Eva Keuls led her to examine his characterizations of prostitutes in Greek comedy. Trained by Thomas Kelly in Greek history, she applied his high standards of source criticism to discern what we can really know about Aspasia of Miletus. Study of Aspasia showed her that receptions profoundly color our view of historicity; indeed, receptions of Aspasia’s life have inspired liberationists, salonieres and most recently specialists in rhetoric. Henry was simultaneously gratified and baffled when historians of rhetoric interpreted her findings regarding Aspasia as proof that Aspasia had been a great rhetorician.

Because we are creatures of our time and place, Henry observes, the goddess *Fortuna* provided her a rigorous classical education at the dawn of the feminist movement and its arrival into classical scholarship. Philology and radical feminism together led her to work on the second/third century CE Greek author Athenaeus as a pornographer. Participating in the 1997 conference on Athenaeus at the University of Exeter, with many distinguished Hispanist classicists, brought home the revelation that even the term Eurocentric is not accurate, because classical scholarship in the Hispanophone and Lusophone world is rich, with its own trajectories. Thus she has become intrigued by receptions of the Greco-Roman word in the New World.

Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz “Tragedy: Good for Feminist Politics?”

Rabinowitz’ presentation will share her thinking, over the past several years, about the relationship between the performance of Greek tragedy and various progressive causes. She will look specifically at productions emphasizing gender and sexuality, building on the work in reception by such classicists as Helene Foley and Vanda Zajko, the volumes emanating from the research project on reception at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, as well as the discussions and publications of the Open

University Reception Network in the UK. In particular, she will examine modern versions of the ancient Greek plays by such playwrights as Berthold Brecht along with productions by Ariane Mnouchkine, Katie Mitchell and the collaboration of Fiona Shaw and Debra Warner, to see if it is possible to produce the ancient plays themselves for progressive ends, or whether the plays must be revised and edited in order to make them useful for feminism.

11:15-11:30 AM Coffee Break

11:30 AM Panel on the Integration of Classical Gender Studies and Classical Reception: Views from Abroad

Assistant Professor Julie Koser, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures (Germanic Studies), UMCP, Presiding

Discussion of Papers by Professor Jacqueline Fabre-Serris, University of Lille; Professor Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer, University of Basel; Professor Alison Keith, University of Toronto; Professor Helen King, the Open University (UK). Each will present a 10-minute summary of the paper she has posted on the conference website; a question and discussion session will follow.

Jacqueline Fabre-Serris, “The Translation of Sappho by Rene Vivien: an Event in Literary Paris of 1900 and its Reception in the French University World”

Fabre-Serris’ paper examines a celebrated French classical reception project— “Sappho, Traduction nouvelle avec le texte grec,” published in 1903 by Renee Vivien— as well as the reception of Vivien’s book. Following recent studies on the theories and practices of translation, Fabre-Serris investigates the principles and decisions that have informed the composition of this curious work. It is noteworthy not only for its Greek text, taken from the 1885 edition of H. Wharton, and its translation into French prose but also for what follows this translation—an adaptation into the modern French poetry of that era, in the form of quatrains whose lines are of unequal length, sometimes accompanied by verses of the British poet Algernon Swinburne. Fabre-Serris will compare Vivien’s editorial decisions with those made by Pierre Louys in 1895, when he presented, as “ancient Lesbian poetry,” the second part of his *Chansons de Bilitis*, a collection violently attacked by the German classical scholar Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff in 1896.

A major event in literary circles, Renee Vivien’s edition did not apparently enjoy any influence on classical philologists, who clung, with a few exceptions, to the notion of a “sexually chaste Sappho.” Nevertheless, Fabre-Serris will try to ascertain if and how Vivien’s volume had an impact on the editions and later translations of “the female poet of Lesbos,” among them that of Marguerite Yourcenar in 1970. Building on previous studies of Vivien’s edition by E. Mora and Joan DeJean, Fabre-Serris will consider what Vivien had in mind not only when she translated the Greek text but also when she created an unusually varied work of poetry. In addition to occasionally incorporating Swinburne’s verses, Vivien, who was herself English, inserted her writing into a French poetic tradition that allowed flexibility in selecting words and meters. Her work merits comparison for that reason with that of Louys, who, more or less seriously, sought to produce poetry with an “allure antique” but still adapted to French taste and tradition.

Henriette Harich Schwarzbauer, “Gender in the Reception of Classical Literature from Late Antiquity”

The past two decades have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in Greek and Latin literature from late antiquity, as well as in the reception of this body of writing. Yet gender-based research is still quite rare in this area. Harich will analyze major trends in German scholarly research that attempts to deal with gender in interpreting late antique Latin literary texts. Focusing on studies of the *De Raptu Proserpinae* and minor poems by the late fourth century CE Latin poet Claudian, she will look closely at the apparent scholarly reluctance to identify and approach gender issues, contending that researchers engaged in close reading of late Latin texts appear to practice and advocate a certain interpretive “conservatism.”

Harich will argue that this same phenomenon can also be observed in work on the reception of late antique literature in later periods. In fact, researchers investigating the reception of texts from this particular era tend to neglect gender issues altogether or treat them in a superficial and limited way. She will discuss work on two important female figures from late antiquity, the mathematician Hypatia of Alexandria and the Byzantine empress Theodora, that illustrates this observation.

Alison Keith, University of Toronto “Volumnia Cytheris in Roman Elegy, Latin Epigraphy and the American Novel”

The fourth century CE Vergilian commentator Servius records the information that the “Lycoris” who inspired the amatory verse of the Roman elegist Cornelius Gallus was the mime-dancer Volumnia Cytheris, active in the mid-40’s BCE. Contemporary evidence attests that she was the freedwoman of P. Volumnius Eutrapelus and a courtesan whose lovers included Mark Antony and M. Junius Brutus in addition to Gallus and presumably Volumnius himself. She is thus a rare example of a Greco-Roman courtesan for whom we can name a legal patron as well as three politically prominent lovers, among them the poet famed as the founder of Roman erotic elegy. It might be thought surprising that the later Latin author Apuleius does not include her in his catalogue of the historical women celebrated in Latin amatory elegy at *Apologia* 10. But her lower social status as a freedwoman and mime-actress distinguishes her sharply from these women of loftier lineage: Clodia Metelli, celebrated as Lesbia by Catullus; Metella, called Perilla by Tigidas; Hostia, referred to by Propertius as Cynthia; and Plania, to whom Tibullus assigns the pseudonym Delia. And, indeed there is ample attestation of the names Cytheris and Lycoris among slave- and freedwomen in the early principate, all of Julio-Claudian date.

Keith’s paper explores the inscriptional evidence we have for Greek slave- and freedwomen with Volumnia Cytheris’ legal, stage and elegiac names in republican and Augustan Italy and sets this documentary evidence against the textual lives ascribed not only to Lycoris, in classical Latin verse by Gallus and his successors (Propertius, Ovid and Martial), but also to Volumnia and Cytheris, in Thornton Wilder’s 1938 novel *The Ides of March*. Indeed, the American novelist is particularly sensitive to the different class registers her names evoke in Caesarian Rome, for he distinguishes between an aristocratic matron, Volumnia, and the tragic actress Cytheris, while at the same time bringing the latter into social contact with Clodia Metelli and other aristocratic Roman women.

It is Keith's aim to document the contemporary currency of the Greek names of the elegists' *puellae* in Augustan Rome, where their names are resonant of Roman imperial conquest, and to argue that Roman elegy is intimately correlated with Roman imperialism in its celebration of the sexual spoils of military conquest. The contrast between the native Italian names of the Roman elegists (and historical Volumnia) and the exotic names of their beloveds (including Cytheris/Lycoris) encoded in their verse documents the Latin elegists' participation in the larger Roman imperial projects that is otherwise occluded in an ostensibly un- or anti-political presentation of elegiac themes.

Helen King, The Open University "Teaching Gender Through Reception: Agnodike the time-traveler"

In her presentation King will discuss the advantages of a reception perceptive on ancient gender studies by looking at the way that the account of the "first midwife" by the Augustan author Hyginus has been used from the seventeenth century to the present day. The reception of this story enables us to ask fresh questions of the Latin text; for example, as the story surfaces in so many situations of professional rivalry in later periods, can this help us think about what it meant in its original context? From the seventeenth century London quack doctor who chose to call herself "Agnodike" to the contemporary "Fondation Agnodice" in Lausanne which promotes the rights of transsexual, transgender and intersex people, and from the attempts of men to enter midwifery in the eighteenth century to those of women to enter medicine in the nineteenth century, Agnodike's story raises many issues that were also important in the ancient world.

1 PM Buffet lunch provided for conference participants

2:30 PM Panel on Gendered Perspectives on Classical Reception: The View from the UMCP Campus

Dr. Joan Burton, Presiding

Discussion of Papers by Professor Theresa Coletti, English; Professor Sandra Messinger Cypess, School of Language, Literatures and Cultures (Spanish); Melanie Kill and Julie Koser. Each will provide a 10-minute summary of the paper she has posted on the conference website; a question and discussion session will follow.

Theresa Coletti, "Ovidian Legacies in Chaucer and Christine de Pizan"

Coletti's paper addresses the overlapping Ovidian legacies of Geoffrey Chaucer and Christine de Pizan, two writers who conducted a sustained, if necessarily implicit, dialogue over the course of their respective careers. In *Ovid's Art and Chaucer's Wife of Bath*, Marilyn Desmond argues that this legacy is marked by these writers' shared interest in erotic violence. But the long and searching medieval reception of Ovid offers other perspectives on a classical inheritance that can illuminate literary relationships between two of Ovid's most engaged medieval readers.

Sandra Messinger Cypess, "Rewriting Medea in Mexico"

Mythic figures and references to classical works have long been a popular technique in Latin American dramatic texts. One reason for drawing on ancient Greco-Roman texts

was the need to validate national theatrical expression by connecting the national theater with the classical tradition, as was the case with the plays of the Mexican Xavier Villaurrutia. In other cases, classical Greek plays were used to avoid or deflect censorship, as in many Dominican plays during the Trujillo era. As for women figures, the Greek tragic heroines Antigone and Medea stand out for the ways in which they were employed to link historical events in Latin America with the world of antiquity.

Cypess' presentation will focus on the use of Medea as a subtext for a historical woman whose role in the Conquest of Mexico is continually being rewritten. La Malinche has many names—based on indigenous, mestizo and Spanish roots—but one of the most conflictive is the connection made between her actions and those of the infanticidal Medea. Her discussion of the Mexican Medea is based on the classical and Hellenistic Greek versions of her story as analyzed by Sarah Iles Johnston and Carol Newlands' re-reading of Ovid, found in their essays in *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy and Art*.

Melanie Kill, "Scholars in a Direct Democracy: Editing Wikipedia's Wikiproject Classical Greece and Rome"

Epistemology has been politically fraught as far back as Socrates, and, from the writings of both Cato and Pliny the Elder, we know that humans have placed great value on gathering, organizing, and preserving the ever-increasing flow of knowledge. While the specific purposes and forms of such compilations of learning have varied through the centuries, the encyclopedia has emerged from this group as a genre through which epistemology is negotiated with, and often disputed by, various publics. In the case of Wikipedia, the public has options beyond burning, boycotting, and reviewing; they can edit. But on Wikipedia no one edits alone, which means that the Wikipedia community is largely defined by its rhetorical practices. Wikipedia's thousands of editors have established a direct democracy with a range of interest groups focused on developing different content areas.

In her presentation, Kill analyzes Wikipedia as a humanist project renegotiating a range of familiar traditions within the new technological space of a wiki platform. Drawing on examples from Wikipedia's Wikiproject: Classical Greece and Rome, she will demonstrate what is both old and new about Wikipedia's editorial processes to argue that Wikipedia deserves the attention of humanist scholars and can serve our interest as well.

Julie Koser, "Flipping the Script: Gender and Mythology in Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea* (1808)"

"I have finished *Penthesilea* [...]. She really did eat him up, Achilles, out of love. Don't be frightened, it can be read: how easily could you have done the same perhaps under similar circumstances. Already it has been read here twice in private circles and how the tears flowed; as much as the horror that was present permitted" (Kleist, *Collected Works* 4: 385-396). With these famous words to his cousin Marie von Kleist, the nineteenth century German dramatist Heinrich von Kleist announced the completion of his most controversial play, *Penthesilea*. Even before the full publication of the work in 1808, Kleist had accurately anticipated the public's shock. But what exactly was it that Kleist anticipated would "frighten" the reading public?

Scholars have addressed the potentially unconventional aspects of *Penthesilea*: the reversal of fates in Kleist's mythical encounter between Achilles and Penthesilea; Kleist's challenge to the established and accepted form of the classical tragedy and aesthetics; Penthesilea's inhumane cannibalistic attack on Achilles that contradicted the ideals of the Enlightenment; and the Amazons' clear challenge to gender norms deemed acceptable by a majority of early nineteenth-century German readers.

Koser's paper, focusing specifically on the intersection between myth and gender in Kleist's tragedy, seeks to address how Kleist's selection of this specific version of the mythic encounter between the Greek hero Achilles and the Amazon queen Penthesilea during the Trojan War can be read as a direct commentary on the limitations imposed by societal norms on the individual in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Prussia.

4:00 PM Break

4:15 PM Keynote Closing Address, "Connecting the Dots: Reading Gender Ancient and Modern," Professor Amy Richlin, University of California, Los Angeles

Richlin relates that she once imagined what would happen if a future reincarnation of the Kinsey investigation team had a time machine and could go back to classical antiquity to blanket the Roman empire with its prying questionnaire: the result, she concludes, would be full of blank spaces. In contrast, she, as a current investigator, finds in the modern archives the palpable presence of the past. What might be called the "near past" has much to teach the ancient historian, who, in tracing the ways in which quaint Victorians read that lacunose questionnaire, suddenly sees how her own reading has evolved directly from the Victorians. It might be stated as a rule that all study of reception unsettles the claims of the present to objective reading. At the same time, the more the blanks are filled in, the more the investigator sees the direct lines of continuous reading, from antiquity to the present. This is particularly important for the study of gender, as antiquity serves as the before-time not only in terms of religion, but also, and not coincidentally, in terms of the sex/gender system.

Response: Dr. Christopher Stray, Swansea University.

5:30 PM Reception

6:00 PM Buffet Dinner provided for conference participants

7:00 PM Gender, Classical Reception and the Arts

Reading of Poetry on Classically Mythic Canines by Professor Michael Collier, English.
Professor Martha Nell Smith, English: College of Arts and Humanities ADVANCE
Professor, Presiding.

Panel on Gender and Classical Reception in Theater and Film: Associate Professor Caroline Eades, Presider and Organizer. Panelists to include Assistant Professor Izumi Ashizawa, School of Theatre, Dance and Performance; Assistant Professor Silvia Carlorosi, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures (Italian); Professor Arthur M. Eckstein, History; Judith Dwan Hallet, Independent Filmmaker; Professor Francoise Letoublon, University of Grenoble.

Film directors and playwrights inspired by classical mythology have often borrowed their narratives and characters from the literary and dramatic traditions that imprinted their marks of their culture, society and times on the stories provided by ancient sources. They have also drawn on the forms and conventions of century-long and geographically diverse traditions in the graphic arts, from ceramics to painting and sculpture. With an eye on the specific impact of this heritage on the narrative and figurative representations of female characters, the members of this panel will present a selection of film clips that exemplify the adventures and characteristics of ancient heroes (Theseus, Odysseus and Orpheus) as well as heroines by film directors and playwrights to address contemporary issues such as immigration, deterritorialization, the environment in various contexts that spread from Eastern Europe to the Far East.