CL2350

**Gender in Classical Antiquity**

***Independent Research Project 2017-18***

You may select **ONE** of the topics listed below to work upon during **either** Autumn **or** Spring Term, as allocated.

Spend some time over the coming summer vacation thinking about which topic you might like to choose. I shall need to know your choices at the start of the Autumn Term for those of you allocated to do the Gender project in first term, and at the end of the Autumn Term for those of you allocated to do it in Spring Term.

**Why do we have Second Year Projects?**

* These projects are designed to help you to develop your general research skills, particularly to prepare you for your dissertation in third year, but research skills are also very important for your future career prospects, as they are important ‘transferable’ employability skills.
* I have chosen topics that can be offered in either term. Many involve some element of ‘reception’ of the classical world by later culture, and they embrace a wide range of media/genres, so you can pick one that fits maybe a wider interest or hobby.
* You should use these projects to ‘think outside the box’. They are designed deliberately to encourage your creativity (yes, you do have it!): they should not just be thought of as ‘longer coursework essays’.
* As they are designed to develop your research skills, we do not hand you a bibliography. We shall give you a starting point, but a key part of the task is that you need to find your material yourself. Along the way, however, as you find it, you can always check it with us, if you are unsure about its quality.

**Research Training**

* During the last few weeks of the Summer Term of your first year you will be recommended to attend one of a series of training workshops run by our liaison with the College Library, Debbie Philips. These will show you how to access certain research materials that you will need for your projects and for your coursework generally.
* Debbie is also available to offer support on accessing resources at any time *via* email (e.g. *via* the link on the course Moodle page, far right), or at deborah.philips@rhul.c.uk.

**Delivery of supervision**

* **Those doing the project in Autumn Term**: at the start of the Autumn Term I shall hold a group meeting to discuss general advice and to receive your chosen topic areas. Then I usually hold an individual meeting roughly half-way through term, to check on your progress, with a final group meeting during the second half of term.
* **Those doing the project in Spring Term**: you will have a group meeting with me at the end of the Autumn Term, with another group meeting at the start of Spring term, then an individual meeting roughly half-way through term, with a final group meeting during the second half of term.
* During your research you may consult me by email or after class.
* I shall ask you to send me plans for your projects a couple of weeks into your term, and I shall offer you feedback on these. However we are not allowed to read a full draft.

**Submission deadline**: to be confirmed, but usually one of the first few days of the first week of the following term.

You should submit TWO paper copies to the Classics Department Office

and one electronic copy (of your text only) *via* Moodle.

If you have to submit any extra media item (e.g. a memory stick), one will suffice.

**Wordcount**: 4000-5000 words (inc. footnotes, but not bibliography)

**What about websites?**

You can include websites among your sources, but you should reference them in your footnotes and bibliography, always in accordance with the Departmental Style Guide (which is available online and on the Gender course Moodle page). You should not use only website sources, however.

**1. Gender in Classical Film**

**Analyse how gender operates in ONE of the following films:**

* ***Spartacus (*dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1960*)***
* ***300 (*dir. Zack Snyder, 2007*)***
* ***Quo Vadis (*dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 1951*)***
* ***Up Pompeii* *(*dir. Bob Kellett, 1971*)***

The films can be obtained easily from the usual retailers: look out for versions with DVD/blu ray extras, which you can cite as extra evidence. *Up Pompeii* was also released as a free dvd with a newspaper paper, so check out your local charity shops, which often stock such dvds for sale very cheaply.

As you watch the film, note down carefully the times on the disc when significant scenes occur. You should use these time references in your written discussion (they are like page references to a printed text).

How does your film present and analyse the following issues, for example:

* Does the film accurately echo genuine Greco-Roman gender stereotypes? Does it distort any? If so, why?
* What ancient sources act as inspiration for your chosen film?
* Is the film drawing on a non-ancient, intermediary source? If so, how does the film treat that source? How is it similar or different?
* Do you think that the gender constructions and expectations of the time (or place) when (where) the film was produced have influenced the film at all, in terms of theme, characterisation, or plot?
* Do you think gender ideas may have influenced the casting? If so, how?
* Does the film offer a conventional or controversial view of gender?
* How does gender relate to age, race, or social status within the film?
* Who is the “hero”? Whose “point of view” do we follow?
* What response did reviewers of the film have on its release?
* To what extent have ideas about gender in society changed since the time of the film’s release? Do we “read” the film in the same way now as then?

When you come to consider secondary literature on your chosen film, think about all types of criticism, which you could use, both modern and contemporary to the release. What can you find out about the production? Don’t just think about our Library, where else might you look?

Your study should be sure to include some discussion of the ancient source material and how it has been handled. Don’t just write about the film itself.

You may decide to focus upon a few themes or scenes within your chosen film, to allow you to discuss them with appropriate depth.

Given the topic, you will want to select appropriate images for your appendix of images, which you can use as evidence for analysis.

To help you to see how to write about these films in an appropriate academic style, and for some hints towards extra bibliography on the topic in general, you may want to look at:

* A.J.L. Blanshard & K. Shahabudin *Classics on Screen: Ancient Greece and Rome on film*, 2011
* M. S. Cyrino *Big Screen Rome*, 2005
* M. Winkler (ed.) *Gladiator: film and history*, 2005
* M. Wyke *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History* (1997)
* E. Theodorakopoulou *Ancient Rome at the cinema: story and spectacle in Hollywood and Rome* (2005)
* J. Richards *Hollywood's Ancient Worlds* (2008)

**2. Reconstructing Biography**

**Write**

**BOTH a) a short biography of**

**EITHER Augustus’ wife, Livia,**

**OR Cleopatra VII,**

**in English, in the style of either Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* or Suetonius’ *Lives of the Caesars*.**

**AND b) an analysis of how and why you constructed the biography in this way**.

The two halves of the project should be approximately the same length.

You should collate ancient sources for Livia/Cleopatra VII, together with modern scholarship on her. Then you need to think how you will shape your material into a biography.

Your analysis should include your references to ancient sources, and to modern scholarship. You may structure your analysis **either** as an essay-like discussion, with the usual footnote references to secondary scholarship, **or** as a “commentary”, proceeding through the biography section by section, explaining your sources and noting points from secondary scholarship.

You will obviously need to read some other biographies by either Plutarch or Suetonius to give you an idea of how they presented their material, and what their interests were. Translations of these biographers’ works are often available online, or in easy-to-find paperback collections (Penguin, World’s Classics). Secondary scholarship on these authors can be found in the relevant author sections of Founder’s.

When reading Plutarch or Suetonius, you may find it helpful to consider the following questions:

* What seem to be their chief interests?
* How selective are they in what they record?
* What do they think is the purpose of biography?
* Neither Plutarch nor Suetonius wrote any biographies on female subjects. Why? What were their attitudes towards gender?

**Livia**: the biography by A. Barrett is the obvious place to start (*Livia: first lady of imperial Rome*, 2002), and her treatment in e.g. Tacitus’ *Annals* and Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*.

**Cleopatra VII**: There is ample secondary material: search the RHUL Library online catalogue. A good place to start might be D.W. Roller *Cleopatra: a biography*, London 2010 (ebook) and, of course, Plutarch’s *Life of Antony*.

**3. Gender & Dress**

**Compile**

**BOTH a) a collection on a USB memory stick of visual images of how clothing articulated gender in EITHER the ancient Greek (including Hellenistic) OR Roman world**

**AND b) an analysis of those images**.

Your analysis should include your references to ancient sources, and to modern scholarship. You may structure your analysis either as an essay-like discussion, or as a visual “commentary”, proceeding through the images individually or by group. Your collection should include examples of both masculine and feminine genders, and may also profitably look at depictions of different age, racial or social groups.

You can submit a catalogue of images, or a PowerPoint slideshow.

* How much change over time is there in your chosen images?
* Why is there change, or not?
* To what extent do the images confirm or support the literary depictions of gender of your chosen period?
* What other influences might be at work here? Political? Personal?
* Why did you select these particular images?
* How typical or eccentric are the images you selected?
* What range of media have you used? (e.g. statues, vase painting, reliefs, mosaics, coins, jewellery, mirrors etc.)
* Do they present the historian of ancient social history with any specific problems?

Some secondary literature to start you off:

* L. Cleland *The clothed body in the ancient world*, 2005
* L. Llewelyn-Jones, L. Cleland & G. Davies (eds.) *Greek and Roman Dress from A-Z* London 2007
* L. Bonfante *Etruscan Dress* Baltimore 2003
* J. Edmondson & A. Keith (eds.) *Roman Dress and the Fabric of Roman Culture* 2008
* J.L. Sebesta & L. Bonfante (eds.) *The World of Roman Costume* Wisconsin 1994
* A. Croom *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, 2000
* R. Osborne *The History written on the Classical Greek body*, 2011
* M. Squire *The Art of the Body: antiquity and its legacy*, 2011
* I. Jenkins *The Greek Body*, 2009

**4. Greek/Latin Vocabulary & Concepts**

**\*\*ONLY for students who are taking or have already taken *Greek or Latin Language and Reading*.\*\***

**Compile a critical discussion of EITHER ancient Greek OR Latin words and terms for ONE of the following groups**:

**EITHER a) girl, boy, woman, man, old woman, old man**

**OR b) love.**

For a): why are there so many different words for these people? Do they have special meanings in particular contexts? Why might an author choose one word over another?

For b): consider here all the different types of love: between different/same sexes, within the family, for the gods, for a country, for an idea etc.

Your discussion should aim to explore how these words, expressions and terms vary in nuance of meaning, perhaps by time period, literary genre, rhetorical purpose, or author. You should aim to collect a series of passages, cited in the original Greek or Latin, which representatively illustrate your argument.

If, during your research, you encounter different translations of the same word, you may want to comment on this, and suggest possible explanations.

Where do you think you should start your research? (Clue: not Wikipedia!) What source would immediately give you as a starting-point a range of meanings and some references to places where they appear?

**5. Gender in Classical Opera**

**Discuss how gender is used in the treatment in opera of ONE of the following:**

* **Electra**
* **Orpheus and Eurydice**
* **Cleopatra (VII)**
* **Dido**

You should research the operas, which feature these figures, and then select ONE opera to analyse in detail. You should consider the following:

* What are the ancient sources used here? How do they depict issues of gender?
* To what extent are the ancient sources distorted by the author of the opera?
* Why might the author of the opera distort the original story in this way?
* To what extent do you think that attitudes towards gender at the time of the production may have influenced the construction of the opera?
* What other operas did your selected composer/librettist write? Do any share similar themes about gender?
* Does the music in any way aid the treatment of gender?
* How has the opera been produced over the years since it was written? How do different producers handle the theme of gender? How important to them is the classical setting?

You may discuss the libretto in its original language or in English (if that is not the original language). In addition to your written work, you may (if you wish) also submit a CD or DVD or USB memory stick of any extra material, which you think would aid and illustrate your analysis.

A good starting point is the excellent reference work by J. Davidson Reid, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts 1300-1900s*, Oxford 1993 (2 vols.), or the essays in L. Hardwick & C. Stray (eds.) *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, 2010 (Blackwell Companion).

**6. Critiquing Classical Gender**

**Write a critical review of James Davidson *The Greeks and Greek Love*, Weidenfield & Nicolson, London 2007**. This book studies homosexuality in ancient Greek culture. It calls itself a “radical reappraisal”: is it?

(N.B.: when I say “critical”, I mean a review that analyses and assesses the work: it need not mean that it should “criticise” it negatively, unless you want it to do that, of course.)

Your review should consider the following:

* What range of ancient sources does D. use?
* Is he sufficiently aware of the issues involved in using them for social history?
* Does D. employ any selectivity in what he cites or does not cite?
* What do you think about how he has organised his approach?
* To what extent does D. have an “agenda”?
* How thorough does his analysis seem to you?
* What are its strengths and weaknesses?
* Look at the previous scholarship on this topic in English (see his notes and bibliography for some hints). How does D. engage with previous scholarship on this topic? Do you find his engagement convincing? Is he fair in his judgment of others?
* Who is/are D.’s intended reader/s?

Consider other work by Davidson, which may help to illuminate his perspective: e,g, his earlier book *Courtesans and Fishcakes*, and his article ‘Dover, Foucault & Greek homosexuality: penetration and the truth of sex’ *Past & Present* 170, 2001, 3-51 (available online).

Perhaps compare D.M. Halperin ‘How to do the history of male homosexuality’ *Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 6.1, 200, 87-123 (available online).

The classic work you will need to consider here is K. Dover *Greek Homosexuality* London 1978. How does D. treat Dover’s work?

**7. Gender in Classical Historical Fiction**

**Discuss how ONE of the following (set of) classical characters have been presented in these works of prose fiction, with special regard to gender:**

**a) Pericles and Aspasia, in Walter Savage Landor, *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836)**

**b) Sappho, in any novel written in English, published post-1900**

**c) Hadrian, in Marguerite Yourcenar *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1951).** You may read/refer to this in either the original French, or in English translation.

You may want to consider the following questions, for example:

* What ancient sources act as inspiration here?
* How does the author handle those sources?
* If the author manipulates the ancient sources, why?
* Does the work chosen reflect attitudes towards gender found in other works by that author?
* Why does the author choose to construct their work the way they do?
* To what extent does the author use the classical characters to offer a wider comment on their own contemporary society?
* To what extent does the treatment reflect attitudes towards gender of the time when the work was written?
* Who is/are the author’s intended reader/s?
* To what extent is this work representative of the author’s other works?

On Aspasia: start with M. Henry *Prisoner of History: Aspasia of Miletus and her biographical tradition* (1997).

On Sappho: a good starting point is J. de Jean *Fictions of Sappho 1546-1937* (1989).

On Hadrian: the standard biographies are A.R. Birley *Hadrian: The restless emperor* (2000) and A. Everett *Hadrian and the Triumph of Rome* (2010).

Some general information about classical reception to start you off can be found in:

N. Vance & J. Wallace (eds.) *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English literature: vol.4: 1790-1880*, 2015 and

L. Hardwick & C. Stray (eds.) *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, 2010 (Blackwell Companion).

**Good luck!**

RGH

5/2017