

Langford Conference
FSU Department of Classics
Women at the Crossroads in the Ancient Greek World
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Paper Abstracts

Session 1: Looking and Speaking

Andromache Karanika

Daring Looks: Brides as Intersectional Figures in Ancient Greek Song and Ritual

This paper discusses the staging of the bride in ancient Greek narratives from epic and tragedy to later epigrammatic poetry. Beginning with a focus on mythical captive women, such as Iole and Cassandra in the *Trachiniae* and *Agamemnon*, I trace how brides and enslaved women are presented with a language that twists traditional wedding scenes and discourse. Staged as a spectacle or transactional figures presented as a gift, they become the locus of the others' gaze in diverse ways. But a closer look at scenes that present the wedding theme or intersect with the wedding song tradition often presents brides as the 'gazers' in a way that is further revealing about underlying ideologies that frame the female view. The bride is often thought as a spectacle that during processions an entirely community looks at. Several moments in Greek literature, though, reveal the female voice by inverting the gender and gaze dynamics and making the bride the gazer. From Sappho to Euripides' *Medea* and Praxilla's fragment, among other texts, this paper further explores how the bride's eye becomes a witness to intersectional dynamics that shape ancient discourse, engaging gender, race and sexuality and revealing an alternative discursive apparatus.

Jackie Murray

Callimachus' "Transgendered" Voice in the *Hymn to Demeter*

Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*, at first glance, does not appear to pass the Bechdel-Wallace test. Although he does have a female narrator addressing an all-female audience, the subject of her narrative is still a male, the hero Erysichthon. However, in this paper, I would like to suggest that a deeper look at the way Callimachus handles his narrator's feminine subjectivity makes it clear that this male poet attempted to create a kind of "authentic" female poetic voice whose humor could have appealed to an audience that included women. A key feature of this female poetic voice, I argue, is the peculiar way it refracts the poet's own male subjectivity and the traditional male orientation of hexameter hymns. Callimachus' narrator in the *Hymn to Demeter*, as I will show, subtly hints to the careful reader that "she" is a female mask of the male poet, while maintaining a female perspective. This gendered tension, I argue, reflects the influence of what I have argued elsewhere is the transgendered poetics of Erinna and Nossis.

Session 2: Reproductive Pasts and Futures

Melissa Mueller

Sappho 44: Andromache's "No Future" Wedding Song and the Veil of Aphrodite

Sappho 44 Voigt delivers the pre-Iliadic biography of Andromache's wedding veil, which is described at Iliad 22.468-72. The sensuous force and biographical resonances of Andromache's veil in Homer, which are captured through the interplay between Sappho and Homer, exemplify the potential of reading with attention to aesthetics, affect, and gender. Adapting Lee Edelman's notion of reproductive futurity, this paper explores the dynamics of optimism and pessimism as constructed through the scholarly reception of this fragment. The poem's own ambivalence, I suggest, i.e., its projection of Astyanax's death in the midst of a celebration of life and futurity, is what motivates this divided critical response.

Maria Liston

A Tale of Two Wells: Mothers, Midwives and Perinatal Death in Athens and Eretria, Greece

The death of one or more infants would have been a nearly universal part of the lives of women in Ancient Greece. Yet until recently, other than a very few burials of women and infants together, there has been almost no evidence for this. Infant remains are rare in cemeteries of nearly all periods. However, the analyses of two wells in the Athenian Agora and Eretria, Euboia provide some of the first evidence for perinatal death and the decisions that were made regarding infant remains. They offer insight into the role of midwives, the interventions that could take place in difficult births, and the causes of infant death. The informal disposal of infant remains in wells also provides some evidence for the process of acquiring a social identity in Greek society. We cannot know how much agency the mothers of these infants had in the decisions made about them, but these infant remains provide unusually detailed evidence for the practice and outcomes of childbirth, a central event in the lives of ancient Greek women.

Session 3: Life at Home

Katherine Harrington

Domestic Work Reconsidered: Archaeological Approaches to Women and the Economy

Women's work, in most accounts of the ancient Greek world, consisted largely of domestic activities such as childcare, weaving, and food preparation. Such labor, done without pay and at home, has typically been treated as mere background noise, economically unimportant and largely unworthy of analysis in assessments of the ancient economy. Similarly, women's labor for the market economy has been undervalued and often ignored. Although in the literary and epigraphic record, women of various social statuses worked in numerous professions, including retail, foodservice, midwifery, and tavern keeping, synthetic accounts of the ancient Greek economy often group women's labor into a single section, while men's labor is curiously unmarked by gender. The ancient economic actor, then, is tacitly

assumed to be male unless proven otherwise. This paper argues that a comprehensive account of the ancient economy would necessarily consider the economic contribution of women—both for their households and the larger economy—and that archaeological evidence can provide vital evidence of women’s labor. I will explore this argument using a case study of the textile industry of 5th and 4th century Athens.

Hilary Lehmann

Space, Status, and Gender in the Attic Orators

This paper focuses on the role the house plays in the construction of gender in the speeches of the Attic orators. According to classical Athenian social norms, women belonged inside the house, guarding the legitimacy of their husbands’ offspring. This gender ideology applied only to citizen women, however, since they alone could reproduce a citizen *oikos*. In the melodramatic world of forensic narrative, citizen wives are depicted as stationary within the house, while non-citizen women are able to move outside of the house. I argue that space and status work together in these speeches to construct different categories or degrees of gender: the extra-domestic mobility of enslaved and metic women marks them as excluded from the highest function of womanhood, that is, as less than women. This paper’s findings about the construction of gender categories in classical Athenian ideology can help us recognize how space, status, and gender continue to intersect today.

Session 4: Female Power and Performativity

Sarah Olsen

Flesh and Stone: Embracing Thetis in Euripides’ *Andromache*

Euripides’ *Andromache* is a play centrally concerned with relationships between women: the conflict between *Andromache* and *Hermione*, the affection between *Andromache* and her *therapaina*, and the fraught kinship between *Hermione* and her mother *Helen*. Euripides highlights both the experiences that connect women (e.g., marriage, motherhood, and loss) and the competing categories of identity (especially ethnicity and social status) that divide them. In this talk, I will argue that while the hostility between *Andromache* and *Hermione* exposes an asymmetry in origin and status that cannot be transcended by mere womanhood, the profound connection between *Andromache* and the goddess *Thetis* charts a different path through the intersection of gender and power. I will trace how the play generates a striking intimacy between mortal woman and goddess, articulated through their common experiences of nuptial travel and maternal grief (cf. ll. 1-15, 1231-37) and enacted through *Andromache*’s embrace (*peri...balousa*, line 115) of *Thetis*’ cult statue (*agalma*). I will suggest that *Andromache*’s insistent engagement with *Thetis* throughout the early scenes anticipates the *dea-ex-machina* appearance of the goddess at the end of the play: for *Andromache*, *Thetis* is a vital and living presence long before she is revealed as such to the audience. Animated by *Andromache*’s (literal and figurative) embrace, *Thetis* emerges as a remarkable figure of female power – yet ultimately, one whose divine status allows her to escape the very paradigms of womanhood that entrap *Andromache* herself.

Alana N. Newman

All Dolled Up: The Iconography of Royal Female Power on the Ptolemaic Faience *Oinochoai*

This paper investigates the ways in which royal female gender and power were produced visually and given legitimacy in Hellenistic Egypt under the Ptolemaic dynasty (c. 323–31 BC). In antiquity, royal portraiture was a political tool used to convey dynastic ideology. One such portrait medium is the Ptolemaic faience *oinchoai*, which are wine jugs made of non-ceramic material and decorated with portraits of Ptolemaic queens from Arsinoë II to Cleopatra I (c. 275–176 BC). In these scenes, the queen is not only depicted in a ritualistic setting (she pours a libation before a horned altar), but she is also the one being worshipped as indicated by a dedicatory inscription on the vase. The *oinchoai* are commonly understood as objects used by the diverse population of Alexandria for the worship of royal women during state festivals associated with Ptolemaic ruler cult; however, they are vastly understudied and ill-understood. Since only queens appear in the iconographic scenes depicted on the *oinchoai*, these vessels provide a unique and highly gendered body of material that can improve our understanding of the ways these women held power. Thus, I examine the representation of gender on the *oinchoai* using third-wave feminist theory – specifically Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity – in order to assess the gendered social performances of the queens. Specifically, I document the gender roles associated with the cornucopia, *peplos*, and diadem, iconographic elements complementing and accompanying the image of the queen on these vases. By analyzing the visual vocabulary of Ptolemaic queenship depicted on the faience *oinchoai* through the lens of gender performativity, we are able to uncover the gender roles associated with royal female power in the religious, social, and political life of the kingdom.

Session 5: Movement and Mobility

Rebecca Futo Kennedy

Tracing Women's Movements in the Ancient Greek Mediterranean

This talk presents preliminary data from a new research project that attempts to track women's movements throughout the Greek Mediterranean between 600 BCE and 400 CE. The preliminary data presented is primarily from grave markers, but also includes some citizenship decrees and includes women identified by approximately 60 ethnics. Because this material is typically marked by ethnics, it allows us to see women who identify as having come from another location than the one they were buried or became a citizen in. The primary goals of the project are to 1. understand the extent to which women moved in antiquity, 2. the reasons for movements, and 3. to bring women to the surface in economic, social, and political histories where they are typically ignored because the data appears outside of standard literary evidence.

Sheila Dillon

Crossing the Corrupting Sea: Women on the move in the ancient Mediterranean

While there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in migration and mobility in the ancient Mediterranean in the past few decades, this movement is still seen as primarily male. This is, for example, the conclusion of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell in *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), a book that is all about movement across and around the Mediterranean. Even the more recent book by Robert Garland, entitled *Wandering Greeks* (2014), which argues that the Greeks were not only highly mobile but that ancient Greece might be termed a culture of the displaced, downplays the extent to which women were part of this human diaspora. Recent research in female mobility, mainly focused on the Roman period and the Roman west, has begun to push back against this narrative. My research into the material evidence of funerary monuments of the Greek East shows that many women who were citizens traveled away from their home cities, sometimes across great distances, to live out their lives elsewhere, and that they did so much earlier and in greater numbers than is typically recognized. This paper attempts to write these women into history.

Session 6: Ravaging Warfare

Kathy L. Gaca

Do You Want to Live or Die? Ravaging Warfare and Martial Rape in and since Antiquity

Ravaging is a little studied form of total warfare that is gendered, age-based, and war god-devoted and driven. Peoples are targeted for ravaging when they refuse to become and stay subservient under martial elite colonialist takeover. In this punitive and acquisitive warfare, subordinate aggressor forces must kill or massacre either all the targeted fighting-age males or, alternatively, all the males, little boys and infants too. Partly to produce future generations of subordinate and docile gender-separatist laborers, the forces also must capture for rape and enslavement the girls and women wanted alive from the ravaged people, while killing the rest of the female captives or leaving them likely to die. The enslaved girls and women are coerced into subservient roles of compulsory procreation and other forced labors by and for the aggressors through enslaving death-threat rape and other martial shows of disdain and lascivious loathing toward them. Since antiquity, martial culture has utilized ravaging not by openly admitting to being cruel, but by rationalizing the war god-devoted use of force as righteous punishment as well as manly, devout, and just behavior, including the penetrative sexual force of martial rape. This religious ideology of warfare has yet to be adequately noticed, historicized, and critiqued. My paper offers this critique through pivotal evidence from Homeric epic, Thucydides, and later Greek historians and philosophers.