

Institution: University of Warwick
Unit of Assessment: 31 Classics
Title of case study: Greek Love: revising contemporary notions of same sex relationships
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>James Davidson's research has overturned a decades-old consensus about the nature of sexual identity and same sex relations in Ancient Greece. The research has been communicated to wider publics through print and online media, popular publications and public events. The public interest in and recognition of the research testify to the impact of the research on the public's consciousness. It has particular resonance for GLBT communities who have embraced the arguments put forward as justifications for same sex marriage equality.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research on sexuality and sexual relations in Ancient Greece was conducted from 1997-2007 by James Davidson, Reader and later Professor (2009) in Classics at Warwick. The research was published as journal articles, book chapters, and two books intended for academic and general audiences. Davidson's research over this 10-year period refuted the dominant scholarly interpretation of sexual relations in Ancient Greece. Davidson demonstrated that contemporary scholarship on sexuality and sexual relations in classical Greece is the construct of modern scholars influenced by the work of Michel Foucault and Kenneth Dover who wrote predominantly in the 1970s and 1980s. These scholars depicted sexual relations as relationships based on power in which the powerful (penetrator) subjugated the vulnerable or weak (penetrated), whereby sex was a zero-sum game with winners and losers. Davidson proposed an alternative model of sexual morality and sexual practice in Greece which took the discourse of same-sex <i>eros</i> (passionate love) more seriously by reintegrating this supposedly marginal data into the most central areas of Greek culture. Modern scholarship has over-sexualised 'Greek Love', thereby diminishing other elements of Greek homoeroticism, such as the idealisation of the male body and love poetry. Finally, Davidson argued that behind the amatory discourse there was sometimes clear evidence for publicly formalized bilateral homosexual relationships. These were characterized/ caricatured as 'marriages' by contemporaries and Davidson's research has ultimately supported the research of both John Boswell and Alan Bray that formalized same-sex troth-plighting is a very long-standing feature of a number of European cultures.</p> <p>The underpinning research was first published in <i>Courtesans and Fishcakes</i> (1997), which examines what classical Athenians thought and said about the pleasures of the flesh, namely eating, drinking, and sex. Through this exploration of desire, Davidson sought to challenge the prevailing notion of classical Athens as a phallogocentric society which is characterised by masculine <i>mores</i> of thought or behaviour. Historians following Foucault imposed modern views of desire and sexuality on Ancient Greek society. This has resulted in a simplistic binary opposition of penetrator and penetrated, representing the powerful and dominated. Rather, Davidson argued that sexuality was a slippery commodity rooted in intricate social negotiations. Instead, it was the failure to restrain desire which made it shameful. In this way, Davidson's work casts a different light on Athenians' ideas of sexuality and sexual relations which is more nuanced than the phallogocentric interpretation.</p> <p>In <i>The Greeks and Greek Love</i> (2007), Davidson built upon <i>Courtesans and Fishcakes</i> to focus specifically on same sex relationships in classical Greece, roughly 800-300BC. His research refuted the claims Dover made in his 1978 book, <i>Greek Homosexuality</i>, in which he argued that Athenians were obsessed with anal sex, which they saw as an act of domination and humiliation, usually perpetrated by an older male on a young boy. Davidson argues that this view of homosexual relations in Ancient Greece is the projection of modern historians who have been reluctant to imagine a world in which gay relationships involved expressions of love and affection. By drawing on a broader range of sources, such as myths, vase paintings, satirical plays, poems, and architecture, Davidson argues for same-sex <i>eros</i> as a peculiar nodal element in the society and culture in ancient Greece, with wide-ranging and unpredictable ramifications.</p> <p>Sexuality and sexual relations in Ancient Greece is a central area of debate in Classics, ancient history, and gay studies. The importance of Davidson's research on classical studies is evidenced by the overwhelming reception of his work. <i>Greek Love</i> was described by the Journal of Hellenic Studies as 'a baroque masterpiece' and 'jewel encrusted'. <i>Courtesans and Fishcakes</i> was named as one of the International Books of the Year in the <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> (1998) and a Breakthrough Book in Classics (<i>Lingua Franca</i>, 2000). The book was subsequently translated into</p>

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German (1999) and Greek (2003). In 2009, the American Philological Association conference hosted a panel on 'Re-thinking Homosexual Behaviour in Antiquity' which was organised in response to academic developments in this area, including Davidson's 2001 *Past & Present* article.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)Monographs:

1. *The Greeks and Greek Love: a Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2007; US edition Random House 2009; Greek translation, Arcadia, 2011). Recipient of the Mark Lynton History Prize, Columbia University Journalism School, 2010; Randy Shilts Award for Gay non-fiction, The Publishing Triangle, 2010; Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender non-fiction, 2009.
2. *Courtesans and Fishcakes: the consuming passions of classical Athens* (HarperCollins, 1997; US edition St Martin's Press 1998; German translation *Kurtisanen und Meeresfrüchte. Die verzehrenden Leidenschaften im Klassischen Athen*. Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1999; Greek translation, Periplous, 2003).

Journal Articles:

3. 'Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex', *Past and Present* 170 (2001), 3-51. Peer reviewed. Awarded George Mosse Prize for outstanding contribution to Gay and Lesbian Studies, 2000-1.

Chapters in Books:

4. 'Revolutions in Human Time. Age-Class in Athens and the Greekness of Greek Revolutions' in R. Osborne and S. Goldhill, eds. *Rethinking Revolutions through Ancient Greece* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 29-67. Peer reviewed.
5. 'Making a spectacle of Her(self). The Courtesan and the Art of the Present' in M. Feldman and B. Gordon, eds., *The Courtesans' Arts* (Oxford, 2006), 29-51. Peer reviewed.
6. 'Politics, Poetics and Eros in Archaic Poetry' in E. Sanders, ed., *Erôs and the polis: Love in context* (BICS supplement 119) (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2013), pp. 5-37. [REF2]

Academic Reviews:

Courtesans and Fishcakes: *Philosophy and Literature* 23.2 (1999), 414-23; *American Historical Review* 105 (2000), 1250-65; *Arion* 3rd ser., 7.3 (2000) 153-66; *CLIO, Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés* 17 (2003), 137-57.

Greeks and Greek Love: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (7.20.2008); *Journal of Homosexuality*, 57:9 (2010), 1192-1207; 'In many ways, it's a baroque masterpiece.' *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 129 (2009), 179-80. It was the subject of a Cambridge seminar (Spring 2008) 'Greek love or Greek Homosexuality?' and the subject of a panel at the APA, January 2009, 'Rethinking Homosexual Behaviour in Antiquity'.

Reviews in Popular Media:

Davidson's two major works *Courtesans and Fishcakes* and *The Greeks and Greek Love* were widely reviewed in UK and international media, including *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Times*, *The Australian* (AU), *The Washington Post* (US), *The Spectator*, *The London Review of Books*, *The New Yorker* (US), *The Independent*, *The Times Educational Supplement*, *Corriere della Sera* (IT), *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and *Publishersweekly.com* (US). *Courtesans and Fishcakes* was a book of the year in the *Australian Financial Review* (1997) and *The Times* (1997). It was noted by Faber and Faber as the book they wished they'd published in 'Publishers' hits and misses', *Financial Times*, 1997. It was a writer's Top 10 book in *Geographical Magazine* (2007). It was one of the 'International Books of the Year' in *TLS* (4.12.98) and one of the 'Breakthrough Books in Classics' in *Lingua Franca* (Nov 2000:15).

Research grants:

AHRC Leave, 'Same sex eros in Ancient Greece', Jan-Mar 2006, £10,511.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Davidson's research on sexuality and sexual relations in Ancient Greece presents a different understanding of Ancient Greek society and culture, feeding into public discussions about the nature of homosexual relations in Ancient Greece, and about the relationship between Antiquity

and modern society. It has been adopted by members of the GLBT community and advocates for legalising same sex marriage as illustrating the historical precedence for same sex relationships. The book and its US edition (Random House, 2009), were published during the height of debate about same sex marriage in a number of US states. An article in the popular American online magazine *Slate* (4 million readers a day) made explicit the connection between Davidson's research and the debate about whether homosexual relationships should be afforded the same status as heterosexual ones. *Greek Love* is described as a 'landmark study' and recommended as 'required reading for anybody curious about the antecedents of the current impasse' in American state legislatures. It 'provides an important invitation to open our eyes to the multiplicity of ways in which people loved one another in Ancient Greece.' Michael Dirda in the *Washington Post* (2009) claims that 'though Davidson never says it outright, *The Greeks and Greek Love* tacitly validates modern same sex marriage.' References to the book also abound in blogs posted around the world on the classics and Ancient Greece, books and the publishing industry, gay rights and popular media. The UK policy think tank Policy Exchange referenced *Greek Love* for its exploration of the historical case for gay marriage in Ancient Greece in its 2012 publication recommending that the government legislate for equal marriage ('*What's in a name? Is there a case for equal marriage?*').

The impact of Davidson's research in the United States on the publishing industry and the reading public is further evidenced by public recognition. *Greek Love* received the Mark Lynton History Prize (2010) from the Nieman Foundation for Journalism and the Columbia School of Journalism awarded to the 'book-length work of history on any subject that best combines intellectual or scholarly distinction with felicity of expression.' The book was also awarded the Randy Shilts Award for Gay non-fiction by Publishing Triangle, a New York based organisation which promotes books and other written materials by LGBT authors or with LGBT themes. It was one of three Stonewall Honour Books in Non-Fiction in 2010 which is sponsored by the American Library Association; and was the winner of the Lambda Award for LGBT non-fiction (2010) which honours books on any subject written for the general reader. The reach of the impact is evidenced by the number of copies of Davidson's books sold worldwide, selling more than 20,000 copies combined (Nielsen Bookscan). His books, *Courtesans and Fishcakes* and *Greek Love* have been translated into German and Greek, further demonstrating the significance of Davidson's impact and extending the impact internationally. The books were reviewed extensively in national newspapers in the UK (*Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*), Canada (*The Globe and Mail*), Australia (*The Australian*) and the USA (*New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Washington Times*) and in British, Australian, American and French magazines (*Spectator*, *Prospect*, *The Monthly*, *Slate*, *L'Economie Politique*). There has been a great interest in Davidson's books in online forums and blogs, including the BBC TV blog (2013) and the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung's* blogs (2009).

As well as print media and popular online interest, Davidson's research has also been featured on radio and television programmes. He was consulted and interviewed for the television programme 'The Bible: A History' about St Paul and sexuality (Channel 4, Jan 2010, avg 1 million viewers). He contributed to the BBC Radio 4 programme 'A History of the World in 100 Objects' (May 2010, avg 4 million listeners per episode); *Greek Love* is also referenced as further reading for the Warren Cup on the British Museum website. Davidson was consulted for the BBC Radio 3 programme 'Out in the World – A Global Gay History' which aired in 2011 and 2012 (approx. listening figures per episode 78,000). A reading from *Courtesans and Fishcakes* was featured on 'Something Understood', BBC Radio 4, 2008 (estimated figures 441,480).

Greek Love also led to Davidson being invited to write a series of pamphlets on Greek Mythology for *The Guardian* in January 2008 (daily paper circulation 378,394), still available on the newspaper's website (4 million unique visitors per day). Davidson has been a contributor to the *London Review of Books* since the early 1990s, writing over 20 articles on Greek mythology, politics, social life, literature and art. Since 2008 Davidson has written two book reviews (*Atlantis Story*, 2008; *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, 2010) and an exhibition review (Bronze, Royal Academy, 2012). His podcast 'Sex in the Ancient World', recorded in 2009 and available on Warwick's iTunesU channel has received 89,747 downloads (figures available to 02/12). His public appearances include a talk about *Greek Love* at Gay's the World Bookshop in London (admission

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free; 29.01.2009) as part of its 30th anniversary celebrations. The event was included in *The Guardian Saturday Review: Events* (24.01.2009). He participated in a discussion panel on 'The Greeks' for the Hay-on-Wye literature festival in June 2012 which had a sold out audience of 50.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Prizes

- Mark Lynton History Prize, Lukas Prize Project, Columbia University Journalism School (2010) <http://www.journalism.columbia.edu/page/187-lukas-prizes-past-winners-and-jurors/188>
- Stonewall Award Honour Book in Non-Fiction 2010 <http://www.ala.org/glbtrt/award/honored/>
- Randy Shilts Award for Gay non-fiction 2010 <http://www.publishingtriangle.org/awards.asp#Randy>
- Lambda Award for LGBT non-fiction (<http://www.lambdaliterary.org/winners-finalists/05/10/2010-awards-finalists-winners/>)

Feature Articles and Editorials: (cached pages available)

- Emily Wilson, 'Ancient Greek Lessons about Gay Marriage', *Slate Magazine*, 22.09.2009 (4 million unique visitors per day)
- G.W. Bowerstock, 'Men and Boys', *New York Review of Books*, 24.09.2009 (135,000 worldwide circulation in 2009; monthly average of 521,376 unique website visitors 2013)
- Alexander Nazaryn, 'The Topsy Hero', *New York Times Opinion Pages*, 1.1.2009 <http://proof.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/the-topsy-hero/> (paper circulation 928,000; 20 million unique website visitors in 2009)

Non-Academic Reviews:

- Refer to section 3

Other References in Popular Media:

- *History Today* 60:5 (05.2010); *Contemporary Review* 'Recommended Readings Paperbacks', 22.06.2009; *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 1.11.2008; *The Globe & Mail* 10.5.2008; *Prospect Magazine* 17.12.2008; *The Spectator* 26.7.2008; *The Monthly*, 'Best Books for Summer', 1.12.2008.

Blogs: (cached pages available)

- *BBC TV Blog* (2013), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Antike und Abendland* (2009), *Gaya Scienza* (2010), *Destroyer Magazine* (2010), *GLBT Reviews* (2008), *Band of Thebes* (2009), {feuilleton} (2008), *delanceyplace.com* (2011), *policymic* (2013), *Anekantavada* (2009)

Media Appearances:

- 'The Bible: A History', Channel 4, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-bible-a-history> (1-2.2010).
- 'A History of the World in 100 Objects' BBC Radio 4, episode 36 www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/about/transcripts/episode36/ (5.2010; average 4 million listeners per episode); British Museum Exhibition website http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/t/the_warren_cup.aspx
- 'Something Understood', BBC Radio 4, 5.10.2008, reading from *Courtesans and Fishcakes* http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/religion/somethingunderstood_20081005.shtml. (441,480 estimated listening figures from RAJAR)

Public Lectures

- The Greeks and Greek Love, Gay's the Word Bookshop, London, 29.1.2009 (Featured in *The Guardian Saturday Review: Events*, 24.1.2009)
- 'The Greeks 10 – Sex' with Charlotte Higgins and Gideon Nisbet, Hay-on-Wye Festival, 10.06.2012, online programme and correspondence with box office

Public Writing

- Sales figures for *Courtesans and Fishcakes* and *The Greeks and Greek Love*
- 'Sex in the Ancient World', iTunesU, 89,747 downloads.
- Knowledge Centre article, 'Love and Sex in the Ancient World', 13.2.2012, 1415 page views.
- *Guardian* popular book series on Greek Myths www.guardian.co.uk/books/series/greekmyths (daily circulation in 2009, 378,394; 4 million unique website visitors)

Reference in Public Document

- 'What's in a Name? Is there a case for equal marriage?' David Skelton and Robert Flint; ed Blair Gibbs. Policy Exchange, London, 2012, fn. 75. (10,000 email circulation; 778 downloads).