**EAA SESSION:**

# FEMINIST, MASCULINIST, AND QUEER VISIONS OF THE PAST

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## SESSION DESCRIPTION

Nearly 40 years ago, the first papers on women's archaeology appeared in Scandinavia. In the four decades since, archaeologists have worked to (re-)examine the lives of women, men, and — most recently — "other-gendered" individuals in the past. Gender archaeology, and the insights that it provides, have proved to have significant potential for guiding archaeological research whose content falls outside of traditional gender discourse.

Unfortunately, in trying to overcome one asymmetry (i.e., the overwhelming visibility of men in archaeological interpretations to the exclusion of women), gender archaeology may have produced another. The vast majority of accounts in gender archaeology focus on the lives of women, to the exclusion of others or in relation to an essentialized, monolithic male other. The asymmetrical visibility of "womanist" (if not entirely feminist) interpretations, coupled with a constant and necessary concern over the persistent underprivileging of woman in archaeology throughout the world, have led to the common misperception that gender archaeology is only practiced "by women, about women, for women." As we move forward with the project of developing European gender archaeology, this misconception stands out as a critical obstacle to be overcome.

In this session organized by members of the EAA Working Party on Archaeology and Gender in Europe (AGE), we seek to highlight the potential scope of gender archaeology; offering not only insights into women's lives in the past, but also into those of men, children, and others. To this end, the papers in this session offer feminist, masculinist, and queer visions of the past, as well as discussions of the archaeological politics involved in these kinds of "seeing."

## ABSTRACTS OF OFFERED PAPERS

**In Praise of older Women: Female gender identity in Archaic and Classical Etruria**
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There has been much scholarship devoted to the position of women in Etruscan society, mainly concerning Theopompus' famous diatribe on the apparent decadent activities of the Etruscans (Athenaeus, Deipnosophistae 12.517d-f). The focus of this paper is on female gender identity, but it is not concerned with issues of the supposed immoral behaviour of Etruscan women; instead its purpose is to evaluate the gendered position of older women.

It is argued that the Etruscans of the Archaic and Classical periods held older aristocratic women in high regard, so much so that the Etruscan matron was a sexualized being. Included in the imagery of older aristocratic women are scenes of adornment, and ornately clothed individuals present in public and private settings. Consequently it is possible to see the idealized Etruscan

noble lady as an object of desire, and simultaneously a paradigm for other women. Additionally, this paper distinguishes the respective roles and social position of older and younger women

The questions addressed are, how and why are older women given such regard? Did this status translate into actual authority or influence? Why did age become a factor in the construction of gendered imagery of women in the Archaic period? The image of the female is examined through an assessment of various sources of evidence, including engraved mirrors, decorated sarcophagi, tomb-painting, and dedicatory inscriptions.

**Gendered mobility: Integration of mobile individuals in two Bronze and Iron Age case studies in southwestern Germany**

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Starting from the thesis that an individual's mobility and possibilities of integration are dependent on her/his social status, gender and social age, the research project "Reconstruction of life cycle of mobile individuals in sedentary societies" examines the possibility of integrating these aspects into current models of technology transfer and cultural change. This project has been running since November 2008 at the University of Leipzig and the Max-Planck-Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig. The archaeological aims of the project (conducted at the University of Leipzig) are:
- to develop interaction-models between individual mobility and technology transfer in diachronical comparison of two case studies from the Early Bronze Age (EBA) and Early Iron Age (EIA) in the northern area of the Alps, and
- to test new archaeological methods of individual life cycle reconstruction, i.e. integration index and mobility type analogy.

At the centre of the studies are two important cemeteries of the EBA and EIA. The EBA-cemetery of Singen was excavated in 1950s and published by R. Krause in 1988. The 95 graves in five groups are dated to Bronze Age A1 ($C^{14}$: 2580–1980 cal BC). It is reputed as the necropolis of a central distribution site within the northern Alpine metallurgic chain. Completely excavated and published in the 1970s by K. Spindler, the EIA-tumulus Magdalenenberg contains 126 burials (Ha D1; 616–c. 550 BC) and is one of the greatest cemeteries of the Western Hallstatt Culture. Varied burial objects could be connected with the early iron smelting in the Black Forest. Both sites show varies contacts to regions far away in Europe.

**Masculinity and identity on prehistoric Cyprus**

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Representations and abstractions produced by prehistoric people were not separate and intangible entities: they formed an integral part of the material aspects of everyday life. Materially and

symbolically, representations of people, divinities, animals, plants and diverse objects from archaeological contexts express and portray belief systems, gender constructs and social identities. Such symbols and images, along with utensils and tools, represent shared human practices, material goods that actively express diverse aspects of gender and social identity. Using an array of material culture from Chalcolithic and Bronze Age Cyprus, this paper not only considers the links between gender and social identity, it also examines more specifically the concept of masculinity as it may be related to and represented in these remains.

**Reassessing concepts of masculinity with archaeological data: The Argaric Bronze Age in southeast Iberia**

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This paper will focus on the Argaric societies of Southeast Iberia (c. 2250-1450 cal BC). It will reassess traditional concepts of masculinity conveyed by the archaeological literature and show how these concepts are strongly rooted in what we think we already know about early warrior societies. The traditional archaeological discourse has conferred a paramount importance to the emergence and development of an institutionalised body of warriors to explain Argaric social dynamics and has based this claim on the appearance of specialised weaponry (namely halberds and swords) in the archaeological record. However, recent evidence related to skeletal remains and the very weapons (metal-wear and low numbers of hypothetical weapons) challenge the concept of implicit traditional hegemonic masculinity assumed for the Argaric world.

**Images of masculinity in Late Antiquity**

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In the visual arts of Late Antiquity, we find a broad range of images and concepts of masculinity: from the image of the god like emperor on the very top of society to members of the military and court élite, further down to the so called common men and, on the very bottom, slaves and prisoners of war. As there is as good as no research on this topic, I can only attempt to give a first overview. By doing this, two aspects that have been used and developed also in the field of gender studies seem to be important to me. First, the question of power relations as it had been formulated by Michel Foucault. As every society is constituted (also) by social differences, differences between men, or groups of men, are probably no less important than differences between men, as a whole, and women. Thus, one could ask how these differences in power, status, personal freedom, wealth etc. are reflected in the images of the men in question. Slaves, for example can be depicted as being beaten for minor reasons, prisoners of war can be depicted

as being displayed during a triumph or as even torn to pieces by wild animals in the amphitheatre. Second, the role of desire whose importance has been stressed, inter alia, by Jacques Lacan and his followers working in the field of cultural history. Beautiful young men as the object of (explicitly) female or (implicitly) male desire are first of all found in the mythical realm, e.g. in the depictions of the hunter Hippolytus (desired by his stepmother Phaedra) or of the god Dionysos. In Christian iconography, we have the young naked Jonah, sleeping under the gourd-tree. A somewhat more subtle way of eroticising can be found in the representations of the male members of the élite. Most often, the faces are clean shaven, thus giving the impression of youth and beauty. These men are usually dressed in knee-long tunics, white stockings and black lacquer shoes! When combined with victimization, the strategies of eroticising a man are much cruder: prisoners set on display with their hands bound on the back are often half naked; the victims of the mythical monster Polyphemus can be rendered in an openly obscene way. My paper will present an iconographic analysis of these images of masculinity, guided by the two aspects explained above.

**To queer or not to queer? The question is now/then: Sex/gender and Burial No. 10 at the Mokrin necropolis**

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Arguing that gender is never a free theatrical display, but a strongly embodied performative practice, this work examines an Early Bronze Age burial (Grave No. 10) from the Mokrin necropolis (Serbia). Modern heteronormative views of sex, gender and sexuality have been crucial for its examination and interpretation. In previous studies, the "normative" burial treatment at Mokrin was defined on the basis of heteronormative views of biological sex and gender: male individuals were oriented north-south and females were oriented in the opposite direction, with appropriate grave goods. However, when the orientation was not the one expected for the biological sex of the deceased, several explanations were given (wrong sex determination, gender not matching sex, not a community member, special status in the community, etc.). It is clear that biological sex, as a stable category independent of its materiality, was considered a primary category in engendering the deceased, naturalizing a binary division of the bodies. This approach by default queers the body of the older man contained in Grave No. 10, who was oriented south-north and buried with dress ornaments normally associated with adult females: a pair of "Cypriote" knot-headed pins, a neck-ring, four copper bracelets and two gold spiral hair-rings. Given its orientation and grave goods, some have even labelled this burial as *hyper-female*. However, if we accept the sex/gender scenario of modern Western culture, then we cannot explain why a non-normative burial should be so lavishly equipped. Why should we queer the body as non-normative if the biological sex is different in comparison to other burials with the same body treatment? This paper argues that if we accept that nothing is left of biological sex once it has assumed its social character as gender, the specific corporeality of the body is neglected, the latter being crucial for our interpretation.

**Man unmanned, man re-manned: Queer theory and artificial masculinity in Viking Age Europe**

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Using queer theory, I discuss two unusual men from Viking Age Europe, a possible castrate from Repton, England, and the mythological Wayland the Smith. I argue that in both cases we see men restored to bodily normality through the use of prosthetic technologies. In Repton, this was achieved using an amulet, in the legend of Wayland, the smith uses a similar magical technology to make wings for himself.

I argue that Donna Haraway's cyborg theory is useful for understanding these men, but that modern cyborgs are insufficient models for Viking Age specificities. We need to understand these finds in the light of contemporary concerns over slavery and freedom, wealth, generosity and property, and revenge and justice. These were central elements in being a human being, and a man, in Viking Age Europe. The art of the Viking Age shows that the legend of Wayland enjoyed elite attention, despite its apparently subversive theme of a bad king and a heroic commoner. Yet, if we understand Wayland as a "monster" who demonstrated the extreme logic of perverted social bonds, we may also understand the legend as a sounding board for social norms. Queer theory allows us to see the unusual body in Repton and unusual justice in Wayland as negative images of Viking Age norms.

Thus, I reject suggestions that queer archaeology can only be about looking for gay men and lesbians in the past and that this can only interest gay men and lesbians in the present. I argue that such a project is important to everyone, straight people included, but that queer theory has far broader applications. Queer theory is about deviance and norms, and about how they can be defined up against each other.

**Eunuch material culture**

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In recent decades the eunuch has received increasing attention from historians, in large part a consequence of the flourishing of gender studies. Assyrian, Persian, Chinese, Byzantine and Islamic eunuchs have all been subjected to scrutiny, as have non-court eunuchs, such as the castrati, the Skoptsy and the Hijras. However, eunuchs are primarily approached through literary sources. In this paper I will explore what material evidence specifically can bring to the study of eunuchs, in particular those of the later Roman and Byzantine empires. The paper will consist of two main sections. One section will be devoted to the depiction of eunuchs in art, and will raise a range of questions. What evidence exists? Can one even identify eunuchs in art? To what extent did eunuchs exploit material culture to create images of themselves? What can these images tell us about conceptions of gender? The other section of the paper will be concerned with the body of the eunuch, focusing on the case of the skeleton of a (supposed) eunuch discovered in Roman

Catterick, north Yorkshire. The skeleton was of a young man who had been buried wearing several items of jewellery: a jet necklace and bracelets, and an expanding anklet. This has led archaeologists to suggest that the young man was a gallus, one of the cross-dressing self-castrating devotees of the mother goddess Cybele. But is this a valid conclusion? And what is the scope of archaeology for casting light on eunuchs and gender identity? The case of the discovery of the skeleton of the castrato Farinelli will also be discussed. The paper will be informed by a broader knowledge of eunuchs in history, and will ask as much about our own conceptions (and preconceptions) of eunuchs as it will about the attitudes found in late Roman and Byzantine society.

**Ancient Greece: Cradle of homosexuality?**

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One of the most potent narratives about the European past is the image of the Ancient Greece as the cradle of the European civilization. Accordingly, the ideas – both academic and public, about intimate relationships among individuals of the same sex are heavily influenced by our images of the Classical Antiquity. The foundation of the Hellenic narrative lies in the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, whose ideas circulated through a social network connected by common ideals and a shared lifestyle. The prevalently male circle of Winckelmann's admirers engaged in close emotional encounters that would today be described as homosexual. By the end of the 19th century, however, such overt expressions of "Greek love" came to be considered "gross indecency" and prosecuted by law, as in the notorious case of Oscar Wilde. This was one of the first public occasions where the practices of the ancient Greeks were invoked in (unsuccesful) defence of male intimacy. In 1978, Kenneth Dover published *Greek Homosexuality*, discussing the relations between male citizens of the Greek polis. Dover's work greatly influenced Michael Foucault and opened up a new path in the study of human intimate relations. Dover and Foucault brought the Greek sexuality back into the focus of academic interest.

In the broad field of humanities, literary criticism in particular, the last decades of the 20th century were marked by the rising tendency to articulate the personal voice of the researcher and relate his/her experience to the object of research. A reverent attitude towards the object of our research may explain the reluctance of Classical researchers to join in, despite the legacy of Winckelmann's vibrant personal voice. Initial steps in this direction bring the discipline closer to the contemporary debate and, much more important, to the interests and needs of our own society.

**Exploring the contours of childhood studies in archaeology**

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In this paper, I will address the archaeology of childhood, i.e. the archaeological study of the category of childhood, considering it in comparison to gender archeology. The essence and trajectories of these two subdisciplines, as well as causes of their relatively long absence in archaeological discourse, seem to be similar. First, I will analyze reasons for the marginalization of issues related to children and childhood in archeology, stressing a number of anachronistic statements and myths present in archaeological interpretations that shape the dominant image of the child in prehistory. Second, I will present the development of childhood studies in archeology, emphasize their specificity, and indicate key problems. The issues considered in my presentation will be further illustrated by case studies from the Polish archaeological literature. In conclusion, I will point out the heuristic potential of the concepts/categories of the child and childhood in archaeological research.

**Bodily limitations: An archaeological issue?**

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Among human bodily variations are also those that affect and restrict different bodily abilities. In our Western society this is often characterised as disability or handicap. In our society many people who suffer from such bodily restrictions are marginalised and placed in an undifferentiated category, deprived of their capacity to be a gendered subject and instead treated as an object. This attitude from society also leads to an understanding that disability and handicap in prehistoric societies are unproblematised and practically a non-question. In this paper I will try to modify this monolithic and reductionist view and focus on more varied ways to treat disabilities as an archaeological question. Just as gender, bodily disabilities should be understood as culturally constituted, situated in time and space. I will exemplify the discussion with examples from the Scandinavian Iron Age / Viking Age where gender, status and bodily limitations intersect.

**The itch of "-isms": The (potential) backlashes of feminism, constructivism and other -isms**

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"Ay, there's the rub!" cries Hamlet when he discovers the paradoxical double-bind of life after death: delight or doom. Archaeology sometimes finds itself balancing on the sword-edge of scientific integrity versus political correctness. Gender archaeology, particularly feminist archaeology, fights to defeat the asymmetries of gender both in research as well as in the professional lives of archaeologists. However, this noble enterprise sometimes "shoots itself in the foot". I will argue that: 1. Publications have sometimes been one-sided in ways that have jeopardised the academic integrity of gender archaeology; 2. Critical theory, social constructivism, and queer theory have served to gain acceptance for "gender" as encompassing several categories, but paradoxically also worked to undermine the legitimacy of gay and lesbian genders as identities; 3. Post-processualism and social constructivism have become

disproportionally one-sided in questions concerning genetic and environmental influences on human behaviours; and: 4. Just as gender-/feminist archaeology has been used to both enhance our conceptions of women in the past, and to justify greater gender equality in the present, similarly the rights of indigenous populations have been justified through the use of archaeology; but sometimes in ways that border on nationalism and racism. Sciences are value-laden on several levels. This seems unavoidable. But the ideological and political use of science to propagate political "-isms" (feminism, communism, nationalism, fascism, racism, etc.), is something that I find dubious. Gender archaeology, with its background in feminism, social constructivism, and critical theory, has been, and still is, an important rejuvenating factor in archaeology. But it is important that archaeology does not only embrace critical theory but remains critical, does not confuse ideology with idolatry, and maintains open-minded debates and disputes within its discourses. Keywords: feminism, social constructivism, post-processualism, nationalism, racism, gender archaeology, critical theory

**How do we imagine past differences? Practices, knowledges, troubles of the past ahead of us**

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Gender archaeology over the past twenty years may have acquired the reputation for being about women, for women and by women. As long as there is someone discussing women in the past, the rest of archaeologists may look the other way. Yet we have to admit to ourselves that while attracting attention to the overwhelmingly masculine nature of archaeological narratives, archaeologists interested in peopling the past with a broader range of characters may have committed a similar sin of the generations past – reproducing past versions of themselves (or more feisty themselves). This paper will suggest that it is time we move beyond the remedies of the sins of our fathers, and take seriously the gendered nature of knowledge and practice of archaeology. I will argue that it is important who practices archaeology and who populates our archaeological interpretations. However, we also need to pay much closer attention to the practice of archaeology – fieldwork as well as theories called upon when interpreting archaeological materials. Where do our practices come from? Which theoretical toolkits do we reach into when talking about past differences? I will suggest that we need to consider the past as possibly quite different from the present, with different notions of persons, their genders and their bodily boundaries. Thus calling for queer visions of the past may be productive if we mean by it denaturalizing and destabilizing the normative.