

## To Call It Pedophilia: Teaching Plato's *Symposium* with Multiple Consciousness

As instructors of ancient Greek are fully aware, the transition from reading “textbook” or “made up” sentences to passages “in the wild” is a challenging and intimidating one for teachers and students alike. While Louise Pratt's *Eros at the Banquet* (2011) remains an excellent tool in helping to overcome this difficult hurdle in secondary language acquisition, the content of Plato's dialogue—in particular the nature of the relationship between the *erastēs* and the *erōmenos* or the *paidika*—provides an added difficulty. What, then, are the best practices for talking with intermediate Greek students about the unequal-yet-idealized relationships between older men and young boys talked about in the *Symposium*?

Overwhelmingly, disciplinary practice has been to call this relationship between unequal partners “pederasty,” adopting an emic approach whereby the language and values of the culture under investigation guide us forward: pederasty < παιδεραστής, and it is “a world away” from pedophilia (Penrose 2014: 229; cf. also, e.g., Davidson 2007: 70 and Endres 2014: 226). But I have increasingly wondered over the better part of the past decade if the very adoption of this language signals that a position has been taken—one that aligns explicitly with the *erastai*. In other words, when we, in English-speaking scholarship, speak about the ancient Greek “love of boys,” our choice to employ “pederasty” ends up aligning with the point-of-view of Zeus over that of Ganymede. Is there a way to better try to hear Ganymede's voice, his protests, or his cries?

In our classrooms there is the very likely possibility that at least some of our students are the survivors of child sexual abuse: 1 in 9 girls and 1 in 20 boys under the age of 18 in the United States have experienced sexual abuse or assault, and these victims of child sexual abuse are

about 3-4 times more likely to experience a major depressive episode or PTSD as adults (RAINN, n.d.). And so, given the potential harm that discursive practices can inflict (e.g., Tirrell 2017), when I last taught intermediate Greek I tried a different approach to teaching the *Symposium*.

Inspired by the work of Zola Packman (1993, after which this talk is titled), I decided in the 2021-2022 academic year to try calling it pedophilia in my intermediate Greek course, and I encouraged students to try to read against the dominant narrative of “pederasty” and point-of-view of the *erastes*. This was an experiment in reading with “multiple consciousness” (Matsuda 1989), whereby we questioned, for example, why fathers might order enslaved people to watch over their sons (*Symp.* 183c5-7), and we wondered together whether we might read fear behind the fathers’ actions, attempts to shield their young sons from harm.

In calling it pedophilia in my classes, then, I tried to encourage “critical fabulations” that might give voice to the silent or the silenced lives that factored in the unequal relationship between *erastai* and *eromenoi*. While my talk focuses on strategies for reading Pausanias’ speech (*Symp.* 180c1-185c3) with multiple consciousness, it holds wider implications for discipline-wide practice. I raise the question of whether “pederasty” is a euphemism, and that it might be better to simply call it pedophilia.

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