GSC 2015
Gender and Status Competition in Premodern Societies
November 26-7 2015, Umeå Universitet
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Foreword

Although many historical studies have explored relationships between gender and power, few have examined the intersections between gender and status competition. We define status competition here as any activity where individuals compete for superiority in status. In this workshop, we wish to focus on how gendered behaviours and appearances have been used as a means for status competition, and how such status competition shaped both intra and inter-gender hierarchies. We are particularly interested in the physicality and materiality of status competition, namely the ways in which gender and status were negotiated and performed through speech, emotions, gestures, facial expressions, body language, comportment and clothing as well as material objects and visualized symbols. A central aim of the workshop is to integrate theoretical perspectives on emotions and senses with gender analysis on a micro-sociological and inter-personal level.

Jonas Liliequist, Anna Foka, Stina Karlgren, and Lewis Webb
Program

Thursday, November 26

08.30 – 09.00  Registration and welcome

09.00 – 10.30  Session 1: Games, brawls, and jokes
               Moderator: Lewis Webb
               Participants: Martha Bayless, Camilla Schjerning, Jonas Liliequist

10.30 – 10.45  Coffee, refreshments

10.45 – 12.15  Session 2: Conspicuous consumption
               Moderator: Stina Karlgren
               Participants: Ursula Rothe, Eva Andersson, Ulla Ijäs

12.15 – 13.15  Lunch

13.15 – 14.30  Keynote 1: Mehmet Kalpakli

14.30 – 14.45  Coffee, refreshments

14.45 – 16.00  Keynote 2: Anna Foka

16.00 – 16.15  Coffee, refreshments

16.15 – 18.15  Session 3: Elite ceremonies
               Moderator: Jonas Liliequist
               Participants: Nadia Cheikh, Lewis Webb, Lovisa Brännstedt, Martin Huang

19.30  Conference dinner, Köksbaren

Friday, November 27

09.00 – 10.00  Session 4: Inscribing identities
               Moderator: Anna Foka
               Participants: Godelinde Perk, Danijela Kambaskovic

10.00 – 10.15  Coffee, refreshments

10.15 – 11.45  Session 5: Patronage networks
               Moderator: Helena Wangefelt Ström
               Participants: Federico Barbierato, Stina Karlgren, Sara Ehrling & Britt-Marie Karlsson

11.45 – 12.45  Lunch

12.45 – 14.15  Session 6: Embodied performances
               Moderator: Anna Foka
               Participants: Yiqun Zhou, Fabian Persson, Umberto Grassi

14.15 – 14.30  Coffee, refreshments

14.30 – 16.00  Conclusions, plans for the future
Session 1: Games, brawls, and jokes

Martha Bayless
University of Oregon (US)

Medieval Ritual Board Games: Power, Display, and Gender

Now reduced to inconsequentiality or “child’s play,” in the pre-modern era board games were significant cultural markers of power and status. The cultural importance of board games has increasingly come into focus in recent years: scholar Leslie Kurke, for instance, won the MacArthur (“Genius”) Grant for her work showing the ways in which ancient Greek board games contributed to growing ideas about democracy. In this study I will explore the cultural work done by three important board games that preceded chess: the game known as tafıl (alternatively tafıl or hnefatafl); which originated in Scandinavia and was played there and in Celtic and English realms for more than a thousand years; the Celtic, possibly sub-Roman game of gwyddbwyll/fidchell; and tables, descended from a late antique Roman game and a relative of modern backgammon. These games — miniaturised competition, and often miniaturised warfare — were long associated with rulership and warriorlike prowess, an association which shows up widely in both literature and in the laws. In medieval Wales, for instance, when certain kinds of officials came into office, they were granted a boardgame as part of their regalia; similarly boardgames were found in male rulers’ graves in early Anglo-Saxon England. Yet in discussion of the cultural significance of board games, the aspect of gender has been overlooked. Although the literature and laws depict them as male pursuits, and the pieces were called “men” in the various languages, in actual historical documents we find substantial records showing that women played them as well — daughters of kings often learning the games from their fathers — and that they were similarly a sign of high status. With the factor of gender added in, this study will be the first to examine how these games operated culturally and historically, and where they fit in in the display of power and gender.

Camilla Schjerning
Odense Byss Muséeer (Denmark)

Chamber pots, shameless wives and brave soldier: status competition and gender in the naval community of Copenhagen, 1771-1800

In 1771 sailor’s wife Anne Svendsdatter writes to her husband’s commander, complaining that her neighbour, sailor Tobias Schultz, has wronged her, amongst other things by leaving the contents of a chamber pot on her doorstep where — to her great agony — a doctor paying her a visit stepped in the foul mass. The quarrel resulted in a violent skirmish between Anne and Tobias, involving also his mother and father, who was a navy quartermaster. The subsequent trial brought before the Royal and City Court of Copenhagen unravels the details of the quarrel and the long standing tensions between Anne and the Schultz family — bringing to light aspects of everyday status competition between neighbours and internally within the naval community.

This paper explores the social, bodily and material practices of this status competition with a focus on the intersection between gender, age and social status — and their relation to the formal hierarchy of the naval community. Through a close reading of the abovementioned and other similar conflicts, I put under scrutiny the bodily and emotional practices at play, such as for instance aggression and shaming, as a means of communication in these conflicts. I look at the way in which certain behaviours and objects are imbued with meaning relating to gender and status, searching out notions of the inscription of class and gender distinctions on the body. Moreover, the paper delves into situations and social relations where matters of gender become irrelevant or where the boundaries between masculine and feminine behaviours are blurred — such as the cases of sailor’s wives taking over otherwise typically masculine strategies of aggression in order to defend the honour of themselves and their families in the absence of their husbands.
**Jonas Liliequist**  
Umeå Universitet (Sweden)

**Raillery and romping – pranks and joking violence as means of status competition in early modern Sweden**

This paper explores certain ways of socializing in an assumed jocular mode and frolicsome tone in early modern Sweden, which to a modern observer appear as rather brusque and obtrusive and hardly fitting behaviour in adults. Two common terms for this were “ralleri” (raillery) and “rasa” (romping), denoting what anthropologists like Radcliffe-Brown and Marcel Mauss have termed a joking relationship. In Radcliffe-Brown’s functional-structural perspective, joking relationships have been seen as a playful antagonism meant to resolve the strain between conflicting groups in kin-based societies. The concept has however been used in many ways to underline the complexity and ambiguity of social interactions. This paper argues that, in an early modern Swedish context, raillery and romping represented a grey area in which the line between friendly teasing and competitive provocations or playful groping and seductive advances could easily be blurred, on purpose or by misinterpretation. Raillery could easily turn the situation into a balancing act, on a knife edge between friendship and enmity. In romping, unrequited advances could pass as jokes, groping as unintended intimacies or just part of the game, while intentions to seduce could be masked as playful attention before leading into situations of outright victimization. But romping could also work the other way around, turning jests and pranks into affection and intentions to seduce into courtship. Examples will be given of how raillery and romping were connected to honour and expressions of masculinity and male bravado in the negotiation and competition for status in early modern Sweden.

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**Session 2: Conspicuous consumption**

**Ursula Rothe**  
The Open University (UK)

**Gender and Status Competition in Rome’s Northern Provinces**

The northern provinces of the Roman Empire (Britain, Gaul, the Germanies, Raetia, Noricum and Pannonia) in the first three centuries AD were home to a very mixed population: a mainly originally Celtic-speaking native population that been part of La Tene culture in the pre-Roman period, some officials from Italy and, particularly in the frontier zones, a large number of soldiers and merchants from all around the empire. The major changes in the society and economy of the region after Roman conquest created new types of status along with new ways of showing it. This paper will explore the differing ways in which gender and status were linked in the northern Roman provinces based mainly on the dress behaviour displayed in the region’s large number of portrait gravestones. It will take a geographical approach, comparing the situations in different regions within the provinces with one another. It will demonstrate how gender often played a central role not just in the possibilities afforded to individual people to acquire and display status, but also in the way that entire families could negotiate – and display their standing in – the wider world around them.

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**Eva I. Andersson**  
University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

**Creating male and female bodies in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period**

One of the most important functions of clothing, throughout history is to make distinction between the genders. How this is made varies over time and is dependent on what a society sees as the fundamental differences between the genders. Clothes are therefore an important source to often unspoken ideas of masculinity and femininity.

In the Middle Ages there were great similarities between male and female dress, especially in the
case of the main garment which covered the body: the cotte or tunic. These were cut in similar ways for both sexes and from the same materials. In mediaeval art we see that men and women both dress and look very alike, at least until the middle of the fifteenth century. Men’s clothes were generally shorter, but the body shape that the clothes helped create was the same. Dress still signalled gender, but the signs were based not on biological, but on social differences. Thus headwear and other clothing details linked to gendered roles was how medieval dress made distinction between the sexes.

In the Late Middle Ages and in the 16th century this changed. Clothing now not only emphasized, but also helped create bodies that looked very different for men and women. Clothes were designed to show idealized masculine and feminine bodies with broad shoulders and a square shape contrasting with a silhouette with narrow waist and broad hips.

Both in the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern period clothing was not only symbolically signalling gender difference; it was in a very practical way creating what was considered the normal male and female bodies. In this paper the role of clothing in shaping the body is discussed, based on preserved garments from the period and art.

Ulla Ijäs
University of Turku (Finland)

“I wish I had the fabric and feathers” – Clothes, Clothing and Status Consumption in Premodern Vyborg

“I wish I had the fabric and feathers, since tomorrow is General Essen’s ball” sighed Marie Hackman to her husband in Vyborg in 1801. Johan Friedrich Hackman was a timber merchant and Prussian consul in Vyborg. He and his wife belonged to the German elite of the town. Clothes were one of the most visible ways to manifest their status. In this paper, I will illustrate clothing purchases, taste and gender among late 18th and early 19th century urban merchant community. I will study the bachelor J. F. Hackman and his clothing expenses, married couple and Marie Hackman’s clothing purchases during her widowhood. These purchases can be found in letters, but also from family accounts, all of which are preserved in the Finnish archives. In his letters, J. F. Hackman writes about clothes he and his wife had bought from St. Petersburg and England. His letters show that his own clothes, including the showy consul’s outfit, were his personal domain. Marie Hackman, instead, was responsible for the rest of the household, including her unmarried brothers.

The sources reveal that J. F. and Marie Hackman appreciated good quality clothes. Clothes should be tasteful, fashionable and flamboyant. Modesty and simplicity were not preferred and even the price was almost never discussed. One of the essential motives to purchase new and fashionable clothes was the status manifestation.

Beside the taste and status manifestation, I will illustrate the processes of gender construction. I highlight the idea of social processes in which the gender is negotiated. However, I emphasise that individual’s social position was more determining than his or her sex. Hence, gender is multidimensional instead of a dichotomy. This is possible with the long time span of the article, it reaches from the 1790s to the 1830s and studies one family. The results of micro-level study reveals consumption patterns typical for the whole elite society of Vyborg.

Session 3: Elite ceremonies

Nadia Cheikh
American University of Beirut (Lebanon)

Staging Grief:
Female Lamenters in Early Islam

Rituals are crucial in demarcating boundaries between communities and religious identities. The “Islamization” of death rituals implied the stifling of emotional outburst, specifically of lamenting, niyaha, that pietists associated with jahili practices. Strong emotional reaction to death was condemned from the religious point of view because it implied a skeptical attitude towards the divine promise of eternal life and a preference for earthly values. A new psychology,
that of *sabr* (steadfastness) and contentment with the divine decree, was offered in its place and a new paradigm emerged of how the emerging *umma* were to confront mortality. The leading and almost exclusive role women played in keen- ing made mourning an explicitly female cere- mony. It is, thus, understandable why the campaign to reform mourning practices in the new Islamic order would have a gender dimension. Muslim women were to become the medium through which the new order would display ‘correct’ grief and emotion for the kin group and the social whole.

Reading compilations of prophetic tradition (*hadith*), Ibn Hisham's *Sīra*, Ibn Sa’d’s *Tabaqāt*, al-Tabari’s *Tarikh*, al-Baladuri’s *Ansāb al-aṣḥāb*, and al-Mubarrad’s *Kitāb al-ta’āzī*, among others, this paper analyzes the ways in which mourning rituals served as markers in the articulation of religious identities and the evolving conceptions of Islam in its early centuries. The excessiveness of the *jahili* female lamenters would be contrasted to the controlled, quietist attitude, which the women of the new faith were to follow upon the death of their loved ones. One of the paper’s main conclusions is that women’s roles in death rituals were critical in providing new normative guidelines, which were to be contrasted with *jahili* practices; and that their personality and participation in death rituals during this pivotal era served as markers for religious and ideological shifts constitutive of the period.

*Lovisa Brännstedt*  
Lund University (Sweden)

**Livia on the Move**

The aim of my paper is to explore the public movement of Livia Drusilla, wife of the emperor Augustus. I will argue that her increas- ing political status was reflected in her actual movement within the cityscape of Rome.

To a large extent, a Roman Republican aristocrat carried out his political duties while waking around in the city, escorted by lictors or followed by clients. Besides his daily public moves, he participated in civic rituals such as triumphs, funerals and religious festivals. When the late Republic crumbled, the streets were filled with gangs moving around in Rome; they did so rapidly and violently, challenging the previously codified elite move- ments. As the restorer of the republic, Augustus sought to bring back civic rituals and disciplined movement to Rome. During the first decades of his reign, Livia’s position was hence defined along gender-specific lines, and the preserved sources do not record any public movements of hers. This paper aims to answer why, during the last decade BCE, the nascent Principate saw how Livia walked on- to the political stage both literally and figura-
tively. The arguments will be that the two main factors authorizing Livia’s movement were the evolving sense of dynasty that underpinned the reign of the Julio-Claudian family, and the already established public position of the Vestal Virgins. Augustus, followed by Tiberius, expressed his authority through a narrative of power rooted in traditional Roman concepts such as the importance of family and kinship. It is my belief that this combination of familial tradition and political power helped Livia to gain a footing in the political arena.

Martin Huang
University of California, Irvine (US)

The Social Circulation of Grief: Mourning and Gender in Late Imperial China

There was a long tradition of mourning poetry in premodern China (especially mourning poetry to honor one’s deceased spouse). However, by the seventeenth century, composing mourning poetry was becoming increasingly a communal practice. A bereaved husband first produced his own mourning poems and began to solicit from his peers and friends condolence poems in response to his own mourning poems. Then he published all these poems in a collection to possibly inspire more poetic responses from others, setting in motion an almost perpetual process whereby private grief was publically circulated and consumed. This paper is a look at how the death of a spouse became an important occasion for male literati homosocial networking and an opportunity to claim or insist on one’s membership in the exclusive club of the cultural elite. Another issue to be explored is the special implications of the death of a concubine in this process of the social circulation of grief given the polygamist nature of Chinese society at that time.

Session 4: Inscribing identities

Godelinde Perk
Umeå Universitet (Sweden)

"Bridget never saw me this way": The Book of Margery Kempe as Competitive Fan Fiction

The piety of fifteenth-century Englishwoman, pilgrim and would-be-saint Margery Kempe has been described as “pure imitation” and her spirituality as a “competitive sport” (Newman 32). The actions, visions and prophecies of the character Margery in The Book of Margery Kempe do indeed closely resemble those of Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena and other female characters from religious narratives. Margery even tries to compete with these saints, as well as with biblical women; in one vision Christ tells her “Bridget never saw me this way,” and in another she – instead of the Virgin Mary – swaddles the Christ child.

However, this behaviour can be read as more than simply mimetic. Drawing on scholarship on twenty-first-century fan fiction, I would like to argue that Margery can be seen as an authorial self-insert or “Mary Sue” with competitive traits: in the Book, the narrator creates fan fiction of Biblical and hagiographical narratives, into which she inserts an idealized alter-ego. This Mary Sue then not only interacts with familiar female characters such as Bridget and Mary but also competitively appropriates their traits and behaviour, in particular those associated with motherhood and the female body. As a result, Margery makes her alter-ego more saintly and more visionary than the other characters and thus gives her a higher spiritual status. Simply put, Margery has herself out-saint Saint Bridget, and out-Virgin the Virgin Mary. Discussing Margery in this manner shows how a fifteenth-century voracious listener to religious tales could take the imaginative engagement with Biblical narratives recommended by meditation manuals several steps further and perform (fan) fictions of self and female sainthood.
Danijela Kambaskovic
University of Western Australia

‘Tomorrow…you shall find me a grave man’: Shakespeare’s re-evaluation of ludic verbosity as a sign of male superiority

For pre-modern English men, displays of verbal wit were an ethically fraught category. Verbal restraint was praised as the superior moral stance for both men and women, but particularly valued in men; and virtuosity in those who practiced verbal professions was admired as a measure of their art, but also disparaged as un-decorous, feminised (Parker, 466) and a sign of inferior social and moral status.

Being able to make jokes in the face of death may be read as a sign of manly courage; but, as Greg Walker has shown on the example of chronicler Edward Hall’s disdainful contemporary account of Sir Thomas More jesting on the scaffold, it can also be used to reduce a prominent man’s cultural capital and social status (Walker in Cummings ed., 2015, 321-2). Similarly, Erasmus may have praised “foolishness” —glossed as plain speaking devoid of hypocrisy—in The Praise of Folly, but his feelings about verbal virtuosity were a different matter: in On Uses and Abuses of the Tongue, Erasmus calls all instances of it—including his own—“monstrous”, by reference to hermaphrodites, considered in Antiquity to be prodigious and rare, but also unnatural, socially inferior (Besson, 11) and indicative of a reversed natural order.

Shakespeare’s axiology of wit is ambivalent. He often overtly follows the traditional path of praising Stoic restraint, or even—more subtly—Erasmian plain-speaking “folly”, as verbal stances appropriate to men of noble birth, indicative of their high social and moral status. However, as I will suggest using examples from Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and The Sonnets, Shakespeare also offers an interesting, covert re-evaluation of male honour and superiority with wit and raillery as determining factors. This counters prevalent social valuations, but also—crucially—offers a legitimate way for low-born men to compete with the high-born, and represent themselves as equal or superior.

Session 5: Patronage networks
Federico Barbierato
University of Verona (Italy)

Women, networks and status competition in Early Modern Venice nunneries

In Catholic Europe, the number of female convents and of women who became nuns increased dramatically during the early modern period. The “monastic vows” were often a choice imposed by the families in order to manage the estate and to safeguard Catholic moral codes. Nevertheless, nunneries formed centers of confrontation, conflict and status struggles. Competition for elective offices was the theater; however, it was also linked to the ability of individual women to form alliances, network of relationships and informal powers both inside and outside the monastery. Despite the fact that their seclusion precluded them from the external life. The paper will consider the Early Modern Venetian case and will focus on the nuns’ strategies to consolidate positions of power and status, strengthen networks and form alliances. Particular attention will be paid to the conscious manipulation, for these purposes, of networks of external patronage, related to commercial, political and diplomatic frameworks.

Stina Karlgren
Umeå Universitet (Sweden)

Benevolence as status competition

The patron of the early modern era is generally known as a noble male, apart from the Renaissance women patrons who could act on behalf of the arts and support its practitioners. In simplified terms, the procedure is commonly seen as an arrangement where men in order to improve their positions and prospects engaged in networks with other, more influential, men who in turn could improve their honor and status. Initiated research over the last decades has nonetheless revised this notion and pointed out how noble women, as a part of the political household, were also expected to act as patrons on the behalf of friends and family, thus strengthening and maintaining the family status. (See, for example, the research of Aman-
In my presentation, I will widen this notion of the early modern noble lady patron. I will take my stance in the previously largely unused letters of petitions written and directed to the ladies by individuals who thought themselves in distress, and point out how the expectation of the benevolent noble lady were widespread even among commoners and subjects of the noble families and how they differed according to the sender’s gender and social status. The pleas cover everyday life, economical concerns and social matters alike, and differ from the more official supplications directed to the noble women’s husbands.

I will moreover describe how the early modern Swedish noble ladies’ expected benevolence was a crucial part of the contemporary struggle over power and status, as well as how gender and social standing affected both the prospects of those who sought their help and the noble ladies’ opportunities to act upon it. The starting point of the presentation will be my soon completed dissertation, from where I will move on to point out further possible areas of research regarding the intersection of gender and status competition.

Session 6: Embodied performances

Yiqun Zhou
Stanford University (US)

The Problem of Beauty in Early Chinese Texts

This paper examines the evolution of discourses about the problem of human beauty and its gendered implications in early China. In fourth and third centuries BCE texts, the concern with the discrepancy between external appearance and inner worth was mainly directed at men. Noting how physical attractiveness (in looks, dress, ornamentation, and comportment) could be misleading and win prestige, respect, admiration, and affection for men as leaders, husbands, and lovers, philosophers of this period offered different solutions to the deceptiveness of appearances. A Confucian approach, represented by Xunzi, advocates cultivating and regulating the appearance in accordance with rigorous ritual practices so that how one looks, dresses, speaks, and moves gives proper expression to the moral standing to which one aspires. By contrast, a Daoist approach, rep-
resented by Zhuangzi, fundamentally rejects the value of appearance as a reliable index to inner truth and ridicules the futility of the Confucian attempt to align the two.

It was not until the first century BCE that a systematic discourse about the problem of female beauty was found in the *Biographies of Women* compiled by Liu Xiang, who had edited numerous important texts in the capacity of court bibliographer. In its main arguments and specific rhetorical strategies, this discourse is heavily indebted to previous Confucian writings about the disparity between men's physical appearance and their inner worth. Inasmuch as the *Biographies of Women* was to become the most influential text in women's education in Chinese history, what it says about female beauty would also define some of the essential terms in which women's virtues and achievements were discussed in China's pre-modern period. This paper will situate Liu Xiang's discourse about female beauty both in its contemporary political and intellectual context and in relation to earlier writings centered on men's appearance and manners. Why did it arise at that particular historical juncture? Was it purely of a derivative nature (in comparison with the preexisting Confucian discourse about men)? Are there any significant implications to the fact that this new discourse firmly adhered to the Confucian approach despite some superficial Daoist echoes?

*Fabian Persson*

Linnaeus University, Växjö (Sweden)

**Kissing Hands and Wearing Ribbons: Gender and Status Competition at the Swedish Court**

Competition for status was the life blood of early modern courts. Members of the elite guarded their place in the social hierarchy ferociously, and often tried to improve it at the expense of others. The court was probably rightly seen as an arbiter of status, a place where status was defined and acknowledged.

In reality, this was an intensely competitive environment where the struggle for status meant that hierarchies could be remarkably fluid. From 1672 onwards a crude table of rank, although limited in scope, afforded some semblance of continuity, but the personal character of early modern monarchy often trumped such blunt formalities.

The table of rank was in reality a poor guide to status, as that was made up not just of formal office and title, but also of family connections, perceived power, and royal favour. The role of women in formal rank systems was a bone of contention. Queen Christina considered having a special table of rank for women, and bitter struggles over precedence between women at court could escalate into long-running family conflicts.

Proximity to the monarch was key in the early modern Swedish polity; a physical proximity that was inevitably gendered. It also had to be asserted openly, preferably in formalities, and ceremony could thus denote an individual's status. This opened up for a complex play between personal standing with the royal family and existing precedent. Ceremony could also be a public way—or often in the case of everyday ceremony, a semi-public way—to enhance (or diminish) status. Where would women and men at court be placed in processions, at meals, and on various other occasions? Who had the right of entry into the royal family's most private chambers? It was calibrated all the way down to the individual components of ceremonies, with a ritual such as kissing hands also serving to indicate status. Who was allowed to kiss the royal hand? Who was allowed to kiss the royal cheek?

Proximity to the royal person could also be manifested in material form. Jewellery or miniature portraits, handed out as gifts, betokened royal favour and boosted status. Other objects could also signal inclusion, such as the paraphernalia of the various honours and royal orders and various forms of dress. All this was visible to others present at court and beyond, and could increase (or decrease) the status and power of the individual.
Umberto Grassi
ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, The University of Sydney (Australia)

Shame and Boast in Early Modern Italy: Displaying Masculinity and Exposing Submission in Class and Age Competitions

In Renaissance Italy the value of aristocratic respectability was inextricably connected to ideals – and performances – of masculinity. In my paper I will show the role played by homoeroticism and homosexual behaviour in the construction of this paradigm, focusing on the hierarchical symbolism associated to the active and the passive role in sexual intercourses, and analysing its use in contexts of inter-class and inter-generational competitions.

Early Modern Italian urban societies had ambiguous attitudes towards sodomy. Historical studies have revealed that sexual relations among men were largely practiced. Even though sodomy was considered one of the worst sins against God’s creation, it seems indeed that sex between males was functional to the reinforcement of social hierarchies. Abuses of boys, labourers, servants and slaves were frequent and relatively tolerated. When this configuration was reversed, and a man of a higher status played the passive role in a homosexual intercourse with a subordinate, such kind of social debasement raised great disdain, and the reaction was unyielding.

The passive role was an attempt to masculinity, and often the accusation of passive sodomy was speciously used to defame enemies. Nevertheless, there were cases in which this reversal of roles seems to have actually occurred. I will analyse in particular a trial against an old member of the ruling class the Republic of Lucca, Girolamo Nucchelli. He was accused of being a passive sodomite, particularly attracted by young men, both aristocratic and poor. The court-report describe in detail his strategy of seduction, the way in which he elicited the sexual performances of his partners, and the severe reaction of the court, which humiliated him in a way that has no comparison in the other trials held in Lucca against the “unspeakable sin”.

The court-case show how class and generational conflicts interacted in the Early Modern urban societies, also revealing the relevant role played in these clashes by sex and gender performances. The active participation to the political life was denied to young men until thirty, and because of complex economical and strategic reasons, they were also excluded by the marriage market. Sexual aggressiveness and demonstration of virility were forms of compensation that the society often accepted, in order to preserve the social order and avoid worst reactions. In Girolamo’s trial, the young men’s “incontinence” was indeed treated leniently by the judges, whilst the noblemen suffered a death conviction.

Both attitudes reveal the complex interactions between different and conflictive systems of values. While the religious interdictions condemned every kind of homosexual behaviour, the society was more attentive to the gender and political implications of the sexual acts. Passivity was identified with femininity, and thus with social inferiority, whilst the insertive role was considered a sign of supremacy. It is worth noting that civil institutions managed this complexity with great flexibility, in order to preserve the equilibrium of the community.

Keynotes
Mehmet Kulpakli
Bilkent University, Ankara (Turkey)

Walter G. Andrews
University of Washington (US)

Gender and Self-presentation in the World of Early-Modern Ottoman Court Poetry at the Turn of the 16th Century

Given the extreme invisibility of “protected” elite women in the public sphere of Ottoman society, it is striking that any such women gained positive notoriety for participating in the production of poetry which was a vastly popular activity and highly regarded skill that regularly afforded male poets both lucrative patronage and entry to positions of power and influence in the governmental, bureaucratic, and educational apparatus of the Ottoman state. A comparative and gendered look at the poetry of contemporary late-fifteenth to
early sixteenth century elite poets brings to the fore some intriguing questions that have hitherto gone mostly unaddressed in the discussion and interpretation of both male and female Ottoman poetry. For example: How do the possibilities for benefiting from exhibitions of poetic talent and poetic sensibility differ for male and female elite poets? To whom or what audiences are male and female poets addressing their work? In what context are they seeking status through self-presentation? Are there unexplored gender-based differences in language and style concealed beneath the highly conventional surface of elite Ottoman poetry? A close reading of a few comparative exemplary poems reveals some suggestive answers to such questions and builds upon recent work on the roles of elite women poets in the Ottoman Empire.

Anna Foka
Umeå Universitet (Sweden)

Ludi Digitales: Technology in the Rendering of Gender and Status Competition

The portrayal of gender and status competition on film has been examined from the perspectives of historicity, authenticity and use of archaeological aesthetics (see Hobden 2013a: 1-17 and 2013b: 366-81, Foka 2015). This research has made clear how the reception of historical concepts of gender and status are dictated by popular demand and mass consumption and on par with scholarly knowledge production. Against this backdrop, this paper discusses the recent trend of incorporating digital technology. Taking gender and status competition in the Roman amphitheatre in film as a case study, I show that digital technology is currently deployed in three ways: CGI, 3D modelling, and technologically advanced filming (aerial drone photography, distinctions between biological and post-human sound effects, camera filters). I argue that while this rendering of antiquity corresponds to the fictionalization of Rome within contemporary popular culture, it also reflects current scholarly preoccupation with post-humanism (Hayles 1999) and cyber archaeology (Forte 2015) in studies of the past.

I conclude that digital technology may facilitate a rendering of antiquity that is not restrained to older idealised forms of Roman popular entertainment, but often aims at an illustration of gender and status competition in Rome by contemporary analogy. By discussing the relationship between digital technology and visual cues used to recreate the cultural and social landscape of Roman entertainment, I argue that reception studies must take into consideration how digital technology implicates itself in historical and cultural reproduction by affecting the audiences’ contemporary aesthetic expectations: a kind of Digital ekphrasis. Similar to the rhetorical device of ekphrasis, which may be used to describe any experience, digital technology in the future may be central to definitions of historically situated concepts of gender and status competition. Beyond classical antiquity and its reception, this shifts reception studies from mere examinations of the ideals used to construct gender in Rome, to how these ideals are brought about by digital technologies’ mediation (or lack thereof) of the aesthetics of Roman popular entertainment.
Mailing List

Andersson, Eva / University of Gothenburg (Sweden)
ev.aandersson@history.gu.se

Andrews, Walter / University of Washington (US)
walter@uw.edu

Barbierato, Federico / University of Verona (Italy)
federico.barbierato@univr.it

Bayless, Martha / University of Oregon (US)
mjbayles@uoregon.edu

Brännstedt, Lovisa / Lund University (Sweden)
lovvisa.brannstedt@klass.lu.se

Cheikh, Nadia / American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
nmcheikh@aub.edu.lb

Ehrling, Sara / University of Gothenburg (Sweden)
sara.ehrling@sprak.gu.se

Foka, Anna / Umeå Universitet (Sweden)
anna.foka@umu.se

Grassi, Umberto / The University of Sydney (Australia)
umberto.grassi@sydney.edu.au

Huang, Martin / University of California, Irvine (US)
mwhuang@uci.edu

Ijäs, Ulla / University of Turku (Finland)
ullija@utu.fi
Kalpakli, Mehmet / Bilkent University, Ankara (Turkey)
kalpakli@bilkent.edu.tr

Kambaskovic, Danijela / University of Western Australia (Australia)
danijela.kambaskovic-sawers@uwa.edu.au

Karlgren, Stina / Umeå Universitet (Sweden)
stina.karlgren@umu.se

Karlsson, Britt-Marie / University of Gothenburg (Sweden)
britt-marie.karlsson@sprak.gu.se

Liliequist, Jonas / Umeå Universitet (Sweden)
jonas.liliequist@umu.se

Perk, Godelinde / Umeå Universitet (Sweden)
godelinde.perk@umu.se

Persson, Fabian / Linnaeus University, Växjö (Sweden)
fabian.persson@lnu.se

Rothe, Ursula / The Open University (UK)
ursula.rothe@open.ac.uk

Schjerning, Camilla / Odense Bys Muséer (Denmark)
CAPS@odense.dk

Wangefelt Ström, Helena / Umeå Universitet (Sweden)
helena.wangefelt.strom@umu.se

Webb, Lewis / Umeå Universitet (Sweden)
lewis.webb@umu.se

Zhou, Yiqun / Stanford University (US)
zhouyiqun2002@yahoo.com
UGPS

GSC 2015 has been organised by UGPS, the Umeå Group for Premodern Studies at Umeå Universitet. The purpose of UGPS is to conduct internationally successful research in a broad multidisciplinary perspective on periods before 1800 in collaboration with international research groups and networks, focusing on three main themes:

- **political culture** – attitudes, beliefs and values underpinning political systems, practices and relations
- **gender** – constructions of differences and relations of power
- **emotions** – expressions, repertoires and strategies

These themes should be taken in a broad sense, including a wide range of disciplinary perspectives from literature, art, linguistics, history, archaeology, religion, history of ideas, philosophy, and political science.

A more specific aim is to place the Swedish historical and cultural development in a broad international perspective or alternatively study how global phenomena have affected Sweden during different historical epochs.
Contributors and Sponsors

Conference organisers:
Umeå Group for Premodern Studies, Umeå Universitet
http://www.org.umu.se/ugps/eng/

Organising committee:
Jonas Liliequist, History
Anna Foka, HUMlab
Stina Karlgren, History
Lewis Webb, History

Illustration and graphic design:
Lewis Webb, History

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