

## THE RHETORIC OF AUTHORSHIP

A one-year seminar series on ancient constructions of authorship

Since Barthes' 1967 "The death of the author" and Foucault's 1969 "What is an author?", there has been a growing interest in tracing a history of notions of authorship and authority in different cultures and time periods. This colloquium answers Foucault's call to examine authorship as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon, reorienting the inquiry to questions pertaining to Greco-Roman culture. We will examine the "author-function" in different media (literary, visual) and genres (biography, literary criticism, poetry), exploring how ideas of authorship in turn shape our approach to Greco-Roman literature and art.

The colloquium, which will run during the academic year 2010/11 every third Friday of each month (September-May), is designed as a venue to foster an exchange of ideas on work-in-progress by faculty, students and outside guests. In the Spring semester, a graduate seminar on the representations of the lives and careers of poets in biographical and literary sources ("Poetic Careers from Homer to Ovid", CLSS 871, Prof. Peirano) will offer further opportunities to pursue the conversation on the colloquium's overarching theme.

The following are some of the areas that will be addressed in the colloquium:

- Ancient reception of authorial figures: What role does the construction of the authorial persona play in ancient appreciation of literature and the visual arts?
- Ancient representations of authorial figures in visual and literary sources: What constitutes "biographical evidence"? How helpful is the modern dichotomy of truth vs fiction in understanding the ancient testimonia on the lives of authorial figures?
- Orality and performance: How accurate are conventional narratives that trace a gradual movement from anonymity to authorship in ancient culture? How (in)adequate are conventional notions of authorship to capture the diverse dynamics of ancient literary and artistic production?
- Authorship and authority: by what strategies and to what effect do ancient authors refer to themselves in and on their works? How are we to understand signature devices such as *sphragides* and titles?
- Modes of authorship: how important is the notion of originality in ancient constructions of authorship? What should we make of communal or collaborative modes of authorship such as continuations (prequels and sequels), expansions, interpolations and forgeries?
- The 'author-function' in ancient and modern scholarship: What role has the 'author' played and continues to play in philology, historiography, textual and literary criticism in Classics?

Organizers:  
Pauline LeVen  
Irene Peirano

List of Invited Speakers:

Egbert Bakker, Yale (Sept. 17th): “Theognis the seal and the audience”

Andrew Laird, University of Warwick (Oct. 22): “Virgil: Performance and the Myth of Biography”

Richard Martin, Stanford (Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>): “*Homêgerees egenonto*: collaborating on Homer”

Alastair Minnis (Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>) “Classifying the Classics: Authors and Authority in Medieval literature”

Richard Fletcher, Ohio State (Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>) “Arrogance and the Roman Philosopher”

Barbara Graziosi, Durham (Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>) “Close Encounters with the Ancient Poets”

Constanze Guthenke, Princeton (March 25<sup>th</sup>) “The Author’s Voice: German Classical Scholarship and the Greek Chorus”

Jeremy Tanner, UCL (April 15<sup>th</sup>) “From the Pioneers to Praxiteles (and Pliny): Artists’ Lives in Classical Greece”

Charles Martindale, Bristol University (April 22<sup>nd</sup>) “Writing Literary History: Periods, Authors, Receptions”