Editorial

The Newsletter of the Centre for the History of European Discourses is published twice a year. It circulates news about CHED staff, affiliates and postgraduate students. It promotes CHED functions and events and those of affiliated centres and research groups.

The next CHED Newsletter will be published in November 2008. All submissions should be sent to the Newsletter editor, Michael Ure: m.ure@uq.edu.au

From the Director

In 2007, CHED underwent a review, and the outcome was most encouraging for us. The strategic component of our funding was renewed for a further five years, with a modest increase. We’re responding to this vote of confidence in 2008 by engaging in a series of conferences, in what is the heaviest schedule since CHED began.

From 16 to 17 May, we will hold a conference at the Monash Centre in Prato, Italy, entitled “Subject, Persona, Office: Methodological and Historiographical Issues”. This is the third of a series of symposia on the persona of the philosopher funded by the ARC, and convened by CHED’s Ian Hunter and Conal Condren, in association with Stephen Gaukroger (Sydney).

From 9 to 11 July, we will host the biennial “George Rudé Seminar in French History”. This is expected to attract quite a few overseas scholars with an interest in the field, in addition to a strong core of Australian historians. Our star speaker will be British cultural historian Colin Jones, who is best known for his work on the social and cultural history of medicine. The third day of this conference will be devoted to a specific theme, in the more focussed style that has been characteristic of all our conferences to date. It will be entitled “Revising Gender and Sexuality in Nation, Race, and Identity”, and will be convened by CHED’s Alison Moore.

The following month, from 14 to 17 August, we will be involved in a joint venture with our colleagues from the
School of English, Media Studies, and Art History. This will be a conference entitled “Milton in Cultural and Intellectual History”, co-convened by CHED’s Ben Myers and EMSAH’s Peter Holbrook and Juliet Lucy. The conference will explore the ways in which Milton participates in and contributes to intellectual traditions extending from ancient times to the present.

From 8 to 10 September, we will hold another offshore conference in Prato. This will be a gathering of scholars in the history of sexuality around the topic “The Natural and the Normal”. Leading speakers will include Lisa Downing (Exeter), Annamarie Jagose - (Auckland), and Valerie Traub - (Michigan). The conference will attempt a long genealogy of the notions of naturalness and normalcy from the sixteenth century to the present.

At the end of 2007, CHED lost a valuable member of staff with the departure of Postdoctoral Fellow Alex Cook, who has taken up a lectureship in British History at the Australian National University. We will soon be consoled for this loss by the arrival in May of Dr Chiara Beccalossi, who will be taking up a UQ Postdoctoral fellowship. Chiara’s field of specialisation is the history of psycho-sexual medicine in Italy and Britain.

I am also pleased to announce the appointment of Conal Condren as an Honorary Professor in CHED. Conal is an Emeritus Professor of the University of New South Wales, and has for some years been an active participant in CHED conferences and seminars.

Recent CHED Seminars and Conferences

In April 2007 Elizabeth Stephens convened the “Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality in the Archive” conference, which was held at the State Library of Queensland. The conference was supported by CHED and the Network for Early European Research.

Speakers included leading international figures in this field, such as Catherine Waldby, Elizabeth Kerekere, Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, Susan Stryker and Anjali Arondekar. The conference attracted over 70 attendees from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States and France.

The aim of the conference was to take account of the turn to new theories and practices of the archive in critical theory, cultural studies, queer theory, philosophy, sociology and associated disciplines, which has had important repercussions for scholars working on histories and philosophies of the body. The conference examined the impact of innovative recent work on archives and archival practice for GLBTQ and sexuality studies, by interrogating how knowledge about the body is collected...
and held, as well as how it is produced. Drawing together scholars from a broad range of inter-disciplinary fields, the conference programme highlighted sexuality scholarship that is empirically grounded, document based, historically inflected, theoretically informed, and self-conscious of its relationship to archival practice.

“Turning Points in the History of Sexuality”: A Seminar around the Work of Thomas Laqueur.

In August 2007, the Centre for the History of European Discourses hosted a day long seminar at the Customs House around the work, and in the presence of, the eminent historian Thomas Laqueur. Tom joined us from the University of California, Berkeley to deliver a keynote paper on “Sexuality and the Transformation of Culture: the Longue Durée”, in which he asked why debates about sexuality are so passionate, so disruptive, so hyper-bolic, so seemingly out of proportion to the questions at hand – why, in other words, are questions of sexuality so close to the bone across time and place. He argued that this amplification of matters sexual is the result of their inextricable connection with cultural transformation, with the coming into being of a new moral order and with the defence of the old, and outlined how this dynamic operated in three historic examples on which his own writing has famously focused: that of Augustine, Galen and the one sex model; that of Masturbation, two sexes, and the ethical subject in the Enlightenment; and that of Homosexuality in the religious and political debate in our own time. In this way Tom gave us a big picture account of his life’s work, drawing from his first book Making Sex, on his most recent book Solitary Sex, and on his various journal articles and book essays over twenty years of publishing on the history of sexuality and bodies. Following the keynote address Peter Cryle’s paper “Les Choses et les Mots: ‘Missing Words’ in the History of Sexuality”, located one of the core theoretical innovations in the work of Laqueur. He noted that Laqueur’s account of masturbation in the early modern era as a thing that existed prior to being named as such, stands contrary to discursivist

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assumptions that word and (cultural) thing are cognate in principle. Laqueur holds out for the possibility of some transhistorical recognition of the thing of which he is speaking, and is led as a consequence to contend with the notion of the missing word, of the thing that does not have a name. In her paper, “The Invention of Sadism?”, Alison Moore likewise examined Laqueur’s claim that concepts may precede neologisms in her genealogical account of the emergence of the idea of sadism from mid and late nineteenth-century French and German alienist debates about Lustmord, torture and barbarism. She argued that in the case of “sadism”, the most striking turning point did not occur with the invention of the word, rather the teleological vision of sadism articulated in twentieth-century psycho-analytic thought derived from the pre-neologistic era, and the most important discursive changes occurred well after the invention of the new word. Elizabeth Stephens took up Laqueur’s point about the imbrication of sexuality debates in dynamics of social change and political challenge in her paper “Coining Spermatorrhoea: Medicine and Male Body Fluids, 1838-1866”, in which she showed how the spermatorrhoea panic of late nineteenth-century Britain represented a unique cultural moment in which the fear of leakiness and seepage traditionally displaced onto the female body became encoded in mainstream masculinity. She showed that these anxieties were bound up with the contestation of institutional power in the politics of doctors and quackery across a turning point in the history of medicine. In his paper, “Looking for a Turning Point in the History of the Body: From the One-Sex to the Two-Sex Model”, Charles Sowerine examined the function of the turning points Laqueur identifies in the emerging meta-narratives of the history of the body, using visual as well as textual evidence. Alex Cook in his paper, “The Politics of Pleasure Talk in Eighteenth-Century Europe”, situated Laqueur’s story about masturbation against the background of eighteenth-century European conceptions of pleasure and debates about its place in psychological and social life. He argued that the policing of pleasure that Laqueur detects in the history of masturbation needs to be understood in the context of a wider set of contemporary discourses about the variety of pleasures available to humanity and the means by which they might productively, and securely, be pursued. In his paper “Libidinal Economy and the Prostitute”, David Bennett challenged Laqueur’s rejection of the explanatory power of the libido-money analogy. He outlined how one might reconsider the tradition of explaining sexual psychology with economic models by tracking the figure of the prostitute in discourses of libidinal economy ranging from nineteenth-century anthropology, through Freudian psychoanalysis, to Wilhelm Reich’s “sex-economic revolution”, Bataille’s “general theory of expenditure” and Lyotard’s “libidinal-economic” re-reading of Marx. Tom Laqueur was both modest and good humoured in the face of criticism, engagement and praise.
alike, responding with the same indefatigable curiosity and patience that marked his work. Participants in this seminar were treated to the presence of a rich and engaging thinker inspirationally reflecting on the widest implications of what it means to write long histories of sexuality, and whose extraordinary intellectual stamina made him a vibrant and stimulating participant in discussions throughout the day (and well into the night!).

**Upcoming CHED Seminars and Conferences**

**Subject, Persona, Office: Methodological and Historiographical Issues**

May 16-17

In May CHED’s Ian Hunter will be running a seminar entitled “Subject, Persona, Office: Methodological and Historiographical Issues”. This is the third in a series of discussions focused on the persona of the philosopher. Papers from the first two symposia have now been published — Condren, Gaukroger and Hunter (eds), *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 2006) — or are forthcoming (as a special issue of the *Intellectual History Review*, 2008).

This final symposium will discuss the methodological and historiographical implications of the concepts of intellectual persona and office for work in the field of intellectual history. There will be 10-12 invited participants who will be asked to engage with an array of issues concerning the relation between the concept of the philosophical subject and that of the persona of the philosopher.

**Sixteenth George Rudé Seminar in French History and Civilisation**

July 9-11

In July CHED will be hosting the Sixteenth “George Rudé Seminar in French History and Civilisation”. The biennial Rudé Seminar continues a French history tradition that
distinguished George Rudé’s tenure in Australia. The Seminar for 2008 will accord a particular place to research in cultural history, but will welcome papers on all aspects of French history.

**Keynote speakers** for the conference are:-

**Colin Jones**, who is Professor of History at Queen Mary, University of London. Colin Jones is the author of many important books on the cultural and social history of eighteenth-century France, including *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (1997, with Laurence Brockliss); *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon, 1715-1799* (2002); *Madame de Pompadour and her Image* (2002); and *Paris: Biography of a City* (2004). He is currently working on a history of teeth and smiles in eighteenth-century Paris.


**Fabrice Virgili** who is Chargé de recherche of the CNRS group IRICE (Identités, relations internationales et civilisations de l’Europe) at the Univerisité de Paris 1. He is author of *La France “virile”: Des femmes tondues à la libération* (2000), and co-author of *Hommes et femmes dans la France en guerre, 1914-1945* (2003). He is currently working on a project about children born of Franco-German couples during World War Two.

Alison Moore is organising day three of the Seminar (Friday 11 July) as a special theme day: “**Revising gender and sexuality in nation, race and identity**”. Here we invite scholars working on gender and sexuality history to contribute papers that address questions of how gendered and sexual meaning have been constructed in French sources that were not specifically conceived by their authors as texts about such matters, as well as those that were. How do visions of appropriate masculinity and femininity, about sexual desires and categories appear in hygienist, nationalist, racist, right- and left-wing, colonial, medical, legal sources, as opposed to how they appear in sexological, erotic or other kinds of texts that proclaim their object to be sexuality or gender? How is meaning about sexuality and gender created, en passant, within the construction of other kinds of identities and ideologies? We particularly welcome papers that address the ways in which sexual, gender and bodily imagery, metaphors and discourses have been invoked about the past in retrospect as questions of historical memory.

We also welcome papers on all forms of ideological struggle where identity and difference were constructed through
visions of sex and gender. What too are the limits of sex and gender as historical categories? Can we explain the past in these terms without reiterating pathologising or sexualising myths, or without allowing presentist concerns to determine our categories of knowledge? What is at stake in the different style of historical approach (political, social, cultural, intellectual) in the writing of such histories? The seminar will feature a keynote address by Fabrice Virgili from Paris 1, who has received broad critical acclaim for his demonstration that the notion of the tondue as a sexual traitor was itself a sexualisation of female collaboration.


Milton in Intellectual and Cultural History
August 14-17

To mark the 400th anniversary of Milton's birth, CHED’s Ben Myers and EMSAH’s Peter Holbrook and Juliet Lucy are co-hosting a symposium entitled ‘Milton in Intellectual and Cultural History’. The symposium will explore Milton's relation to modern and early modern intellectual and cultural traditions. Many of these systems of thought and practice came under increased pressure and scrutiny in the early modern period, with the advent of new approaches to knowledge and the development of new aesthetic forms. Milton's poetry and prose vigorously engage with evolving cultural traditions such as theology, politics, rhetoric, poetics, science, music and pedagogy. The symposium will focus both on Milton's relation to his own intellectual and cultural contexts, and on his continuing role in the formation of modern intellectual and cultural traditions.

The symposium will open with a public lecture on 14 August by Professor Stephen Fallon (University of Notre Dame) and will culminate in a day of public readings at Duchesne College. Participants include past and present students and faculty, visiting scholars, poets, teachers, actors, and lawyers. Among the readers will be Australian poet and novelist David Malouf, former High Court Justice Ian Callinan, and Milton scholars Diane McColley (Rutgers University), Stephen Fallon (University of Notre Dame), and John Hale (University of Otago). For further
information, please see the conference website at:

The Natural and the Normal
September 8-10

In September, CHED will hold a conference that gathers scholars in the history of sexuality around the topic “The Natural and the Normal”. The conference will be held in association with the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Study of Sexuality and Gender in Europe, at the University of Exeter.

This project sets out to explore the discursive specificity and evolving meanings of the terms “natural” and “normal” in relation to sexual behaviour and fantasy in European and American writings (religious, medical, psychological, literary) from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

Supposing that in the sixteenth century notions of the natural were largely bound up with theology, our hypothesis will be that these notions were at least double. On the one hand, Adam as the first man was supposed to embody the pure “natural man” acting in accordance with nature. Nature here follows reason and the will of God. On the other hand, theologians held closely to the view that present human nature had been corrupted by sin (natura lapsa). This meant that there was in human nature a potential for the monstrous: because of his fallen “nature”, man was now capable of acts against God and rationality. It may well seem that this analysis of theological thought takes us outside the history of sexuality narrowly understood, but we are seeking here to build a deep genealogy of the normal. So we will ask to what extent this theological view survives as a trace in modern uses of “the natural” and “the unnatural”.

We will, in any case, approach with suspicion the standard notion that Medieval and Renaissance concerns with the theological were brought to an end in the eighteenth century, although eighteenth-century thinkers certainly elaborated a notion of natural behaviour. Whole societies of humans living far from the influence of Western civilisation were declared to be natural. It appears also to be the case that the discursive practice of describing particular bodily acts as “against nature” or “anti-physical” also came to the fore at the time. Were those two developments related in a systematic way? One of our guiding hypotheses about the eighteenth century will be that the Enlightenment cult of nature was new in two ways: in its elevation of nature to the status of supreme authority, and in its enlistment of nature in the cause of critiquing and reforming the social status quo. Is it a legacy of the eighteenth century that the opposition between nature and culture itself stands in the twenty-first century as a condition of true knowledge and effective critique? And if that is so, how exactly did it come
about? There seems to be a further move from “nature” to “norm” in the nineteenth century, although references to the natural state of humanity continue to be important in narratives of civilisation. But while very concerned with ensuring “normal” sexual behaviour, European medical and psychiatric writing of the nineteenth century is strikingly unspecific about where the norm can be found and of what it might consist. “Normal” seldom means simply statistically common in the rhetoric of these texts, then, but rather points to a social ideal or serves to mark resistance to a cultural fear. During the nineteenth century, it might also be said that secular discourses explicitly bid to construct Christianity as an unnatural denial of human sexuality. This can be seen particularly in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century psychoanalytic models in which the repression of the sexual instinct is construed to lead directly to neurosis; so it is the repression of the “natural” that creates psychopathological “abnormality”.

Nineteenth-century thinkers were also inclined to see some form of continuity between the normal and the abnormal. We will draw further hypotheses from the work of Georges Canguilhem, whose essays on the normal and the pathological show what a difficult concept “the normal” was in the nineteenth century. Via a critical reading of the writings of Auguste Comte and Claude Bernard, Canguilhem makes it clear that the understanding of the normal found in these influential writings depends problematically on the idea that the pathological is always, with respect to the healthy state, either an excess or a lack. This makes it impossible in principle to draw a clear boundary between health and sickness. Furthermore, says Canguilhem, the nineteenth-century concept of the normal was not, and could not be grounded empirically in the study of large numbers of cases. We will follow his lead in hypothesising that, whatever the normal was for Comte and Bernard, it cannot have been grounded in statistics: the normal was not the mean, or even the median.

Whether or not one follows Canguilhem in his subsequent attempt to ground the normal in evolutionary biology via the more fundamental concept of normativity, it is clear that, in theories of the normal, the philosophical and scientific stakes are high. The very concept of normativity, adopted by Foucault from Canguilhem, now does great service in gender and sexuality studies. But it too has its own genealogy, and deserves to be analysed in our collective research with the tools of intellectual history.

Twentieth-century sexology, particularly in its Anglo-American forms, has commonly been seen as marking the point of rupture with the linking of nature and the norm. We will examine this assumption with care. We expect to show that the two terms continue to remain in epistemological and causal dialogue in a series of ways. Kinsey’s sex research in America in the 1940s and
50s attempted a non-normative statistical and descriptive approach to the study of sex, in which diversity was nominally celebrated. However, even this self-avowedly “value-free” science of sex appeals to concepts of nature and normality, in suggesting that more forms of sex are natural than was previously considered, and, by extension, that the “natural”, in its expanded as well as narrow definition, is necessarily “healthy”. John Money’s constructivist assertions in the 1960s, 70s and 80s that the influence of social stereotyping on gender identity supersedes the dominance of “naturally occurring” chromosomal or physiological sex has polarised contemporary sexual science, with psychologist and endocrinologist Milton Diamond being the most vocal advocate of the opposite viewpoint. Lastly, Money’s contribution to the study of abnormal sexual practices – what were previously termed “perversions”, renamed in the twentieth century, after Stekel’s suggestion, “paraphilias” – continues the familiar opposition of normal-abnormal, in a series of texts, especially Lovemaps (1986), that resemble and, it can be argued, are the direct heirs of the European sexual psychopathology manuals of the end of the nineteenth century, by their determined attempt to enumerate and name forms of deviation. Money goes one step further than nineteenth-century sexology in his invention of “normophilia”, a classification that stands alongside the “paraphilias” but defines the condition of being aroused by so-called “normal” stimuli. The difference between nineteenth and late-twentieth-century models is that here, “normophilia”, like the “paraphilias”, is arrived at by a process of acculturation, not as a result of nature. We will then come to ask to what extent the norm, at the end of the twentieth century, becomes for some sexual scientists a desirable achievement of culture.

For further information, please see the conference website at:

New Staff in CHED

A belated welcome to CHED’s Project Officer Rosalyn Berg (Roz), who joined us in May 2007. Roz is responsible for managing the Administrative needs of the Centre.

Welcome to CHED’s newest research staff member Dr Chiara Beccalossi PhD (Queen Mary, University of London,) MSc (UCL), BA (Bologna).

Chiara’s research is based on how different branches of nineteenth century medicine engaged with the study of female same-sex desires in Europe, in particular in Britain, France and Italy. This includes the political role of Italian physicians in the Italian Post-Risorgimento and the influence of Italian criminal anthropology in Europe. She is
also interested in comparative history and geographies of scientific knowledge.

**Recent CHED staff publications**

**Peter Cryle** has recently published:

“Playful Theory: George Poulet’s Phenomenological Thematics”, *Culture, Theory and Critique*, vol. 49, no 1, April 2008, pp. 21-34.


**Philip Almond** has recently published:


Ian Hunter has also collaborated with Thomas Ahnert (University of Edinburgh) and Frank Grunert (University of Halle) in producing the first English translation of Christian Thomasius’ work:

Christian Thomasius: Essays on Church State and Politics (Liberty Fund, 2007).

Alison Moore has recently published:


“Pathologising Female Sexual ‘Frigidity’ in Fin-De-Siècle France, or how absence was made into a thing”, in David Evans (ed.), Pleasure and Pain in Nineteenth-Century France (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007). In press.


Ben Myers has recently published:


Elizabeth Stephens has recently published:


Michael Ure has recently published:


Recent PhDs under supervision of CHED staff

Congratulations are in order for the successful completion of their doctoral thesis under the supervision of Professor Philip Almond:


CHED in the Media

Professor Philip Almond has discussed his recently published book *The Witches*...
of Warboys in the following radio programs:


“The Witches of Warboys” on Late Night Live, March 6, 2008.

Other News

In 2007 Elizabeth Stephens won the following awards, fellowships and grants:

British Academy Visiting Fellowship.
Three-month fellowship based at the Centre for the Study of Sexuality and Gender at the University of Exeter, UK.

Elizabeth Crahan Fellow of the Huntington
Four-week fellowship based at the Huntington Library, California.

Australian Academy of the Humanities Travelling Fellowship
Travelling fellowship for research undertaken in France, Italy, Germany and Austria.

Network of Early European Research Grant
Conference grant for the Bodies of Knowledge conference.

Ben Myers won the following awards:

Early Career Researcher grant.
From September to December, Ben Myers will be doing research as a Member-in-Residence at the Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton.

In June, Ben will be presenting the 2008 Founder Lecture at the National Library of New Zealand in Wellington. The title of the lecture is “The Invention of Reason: Milton and the Theology of Secular Politics”.

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