

ForeWord Reviews

LGBT

Lovers' Legends: The Gay Greek Myths

Andrew Calimach

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After a smattering of mythology in childhood, usually introduced through Disney vehicles like *Hercules*, some formal study of the ancient tales is undertaken in high school. Students reluctantly throw Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* into their backpacks and try to memorize the differences between Atreus and Aeneas. Perhaps in the future, students won't work so hard to keep the gods straight because, well, they weren't.

In Calimach's engrossing work on the sexual details that Hamilton left out, the gods are freshly illuminated and their stories made richer and more homoerotic. A freelance journalist and founder of the Androphile Project, a Web-based library of male love, Calimach drew on his formidable research skills to uncover some of the myths that have been whitewashed, with all mention of homosexuality removed. Drawing from ancient texts, he retells several myths, including Pelops, Ganymede, Orpheus, Hyacinthus, and Patroclus, detailing how gods like Zeus and Apollo loved them.

The story of Hercules and Hylas is one that would certainly never be even mildly suggested by Disney. That, Calimach maintains, is one of the tragedies of current scholarship in mythology; that Hamilton and others have essentially put a fig leaf over the truth, downplaying or excising any romantic relationships between men in the Greek myths. In a passionately written afterword, the author explains why he worked so diligently to bring the true stories to light: "One can only wonder whether these once-sacred stories might be even more popular in their authentic forms, and whether, by discovering in them the full spectrum of desire, our children might grow up more tolerant of each other, and richer in self-esteem and self-acceptance."

Although this revealing collection will find its most eager audience in gay studies and mythology buffs (a forthcoming study guide encourages its use in a school setting), it deserves a wider audience than that. Calimach's honest presentation and gentle treatment of the original tales make it compelling reading for anyone who's ever dreamed of a trip to Olympus.

Elizabeth Millard