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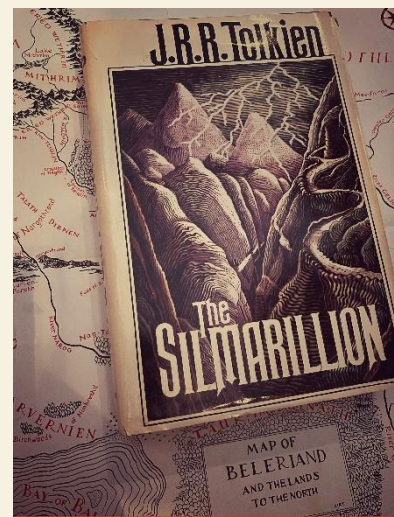
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TALE OF BEREN AND LÚTHIEN FOR J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S MYTHOPOEIA

The Tale of Beren and Lúthien is one of the central narratives of J.R.R. Tolkien's mythology, recounting the love between a mortal man and an immortal Elf. In order to gain permission for their union, Beren must accomplish an apparently impossible task: to recover a Silmaril from the crown of Morgoth, the greatest enemy of the world. The story combines motifs of the heroic quest, self-sacrifice, and the triumph of love over death.

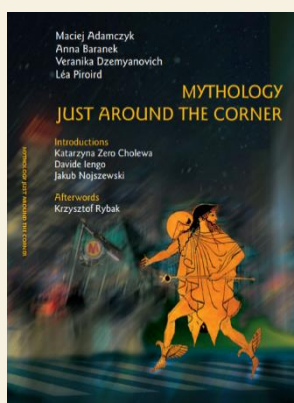
The Tale of Beren and Lúthien occupies a unique place within Tolkien's legendarium. Not only is it one of the earliest narratives developed by the author throughout most of his life, but it also constitutes one of the most complete examples of mythopoeia—the conscious creation of myth in modern literature. The aim of this presentation is to examine the significance of this story for the development of Tolkien's mythology, with particular emphasis on the role of the differences and contradictions that appear among the various versions of the tale.

The starting point will be a comparison of the most important versions of the story: *The Tale of Tinúviel*, *The Lay of Leithian*, the chapter "Of Beren and Lúthien" from *The Silmarillion*, and Aragorn's song in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The analysis will demonstrate the gradual transformation of a fairy-tale narrative into one of the foundations of the mythology of Arda. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which successive versions fulfil the functions of myth: explaining the order of the world, mediating between opposites, transcending the boundaries between life and death, preserving cultural memory, and providing meaning to the history of a community. Another topic that this presentation will explore is the resemblance to classical myths of antiquity, particularly the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, from which I'll argue that Tolkien took deep inspirations.

The presentation argues that the myth of Beren and Lúthien, precisely because it exists in multiple versions, functions as a central myth of Arda, while its development reflects the process through which Tolkien's entire



1. Book cover of the first edition of *Silmarillion* (1977) / [source](#)



2. Book cover of *Mythology Just Around the Corner*, [source](#).

mythology took shape. It will also demonstrate the mechanisms through which a myth is formed, showing how the tale corresponds to the definitions and theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Joseph Campbell.

MACIEJ ADAMCZYK studied Mediterranean Studies at the Faculty of Artes Liberales, University of Warsaw. He co-authored two educational books on mythology: *Mitologia tuż za rogiem* and *O czym śpiewają syreny...*. He also participated in the conference "The Modern Argonauts" and other academic events focused on mythology. He is currently writing his undergraduate thesis on J.R.R. Tolkien's concept of mythopoeia as reflected in *The Tale of Beren and Lúthien*.

QUEEN ZENOBIA IN *TOTAL WAR: ROME II*: HISTORY, REPRESENTATION
AND STRATEGY IN A HISTORICAL VIDEO GAME

Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, is among Antiquity's most renowned women, captivating historians, writers, artists, and, more recently, video game developers. Her reputation derives from her political and military accomplishments as well as from the enduring legend that gradually developed around her figure. Following the assassination of her husband Odaenathus, she assumed power on behalf of her young son Wahballath and transformed Palmyra into a major regional power and one of the most influential centres of the Roman East, providing the foundations for her territorial ambitions.



3. Bust of Zenobia on the obverse
of an antoninianus from AD 268–272
/ [source](#).

Taking advantage of the political instability that affected the Roman Empire during the third-century crisis, she extended her authority over much of the Roman East, including Egypt and parts of Asia Minor, before ultimately confronting Emperor Aurelian. Although defeated in 272 CE, Zenobia left a legacy of ambition, leadership, and resistance to Rome.

This historical background, based on the principal Greco-Roman sources relating to Zenobia—notably the *Historia Augusta*, the works of Zosimus (4th–5th centuries CE), and the coinage issued in Alexandria and Palmyra, provides the foundation for analysing her representation in *Total War: Rome II*, a historical strategy video

game developed by Creative Assembly. Particular attention will be devoted to the Empire Divided campaign (2017), which focuses on the Crisis of the Third Century and presents Zenobia as a playable ruler. The paper will examine her visual portrayal, her characterisation as a ruler, and the strategic possibilities. It will also assess the extent to which the game remains faithful to the historical sources and to the most widely accepted interpretations of Zenobia's political and military career. Ultimately, it will tackle a question that has long fascinated historians and enthusiasts of alternative history alike: to what extent might Zenobia's challenge to Rome have succeeded?

DR WIFEK AOUINET is a Senior Lecturer in French and Cultural Studies at the Institute of Tourism Studies (Malta). She holds a PhD in Classical Studies. Her research examines the reception of historical figures across Mediterranean traditions, focusing on cross-cultural transmission and the role of political and ideological contexts in shaping narratives. She is currently completing a monograph on Zenobia of Palmyra.



4. Cover of the digital game *Total War: Rome II*
/ [source](#).

MÜGE ARSEVEN

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A HORSE! A HORSE! MY SULTAN ON A HORSE! THE EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF SULTAN ABDÜLAZİZ BETWEEN ANTIQUITY AND MODERNITY



5. Abdülaziz, illustration from *Life on the Bosphorus. Doings in the city of the Sultan. Turkey, past and present, including chronicles of the Caliphs from Mahomet to Abdul Hamid II* by W.J.J. Spry (1895) / [source](#).

1867 was a watershed year for the Ottoman Empire: as Crete continued to fight for its emancipation and Egypt received unprecedented concessions that gave it de facto autonomy, for the first time in the Empire's history a sultan embarked on a Western European tour. Abdülaziz's visits to the Austro-Hungarian, French, and British empires had diplomatic purposes, of course (to present the image of a vigorous and modern trans-continental state far from the ridiculed "Sick Man of Europe"), but firsthand encounters with the royal iconography of Europe clearly inspired the art-loving sultan during his struggles to juggle the pros and cons of the Tanzimat Reforms while protecting his identity as a sovereign in both the private and public spheres. Within five years he would unveil an equestrian statue of himself to the imperial court, much to the disdain of his mother, among other witnesses. The statue now in the Beylerbeyi Palace in Istanbul

is almost a testament to Abdülaziz's commitment to Westernization insofar as it did not threaten his absolute authority.

This paper adds Abdülaziz's statue to the lineage of post-antique royal equestrian statues whose origin can be traced to the bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius, misidentified as Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor, until the late 15th century. On his tour, the sultan saw numerous interpretations of the classical icon, most notably the statue of Joseph II, which was directly modelled after Marcus Aurelius's bronze, and possibly the bronze statuette of a Holy Roman emperor then identified as Charlemagne and displayed in the *Histoire du Travail* section of the 1867 Paris Exposition.

In retrospect, half-life-size and hidden from public view until after the Empire's collapse, Abdülaziz's statue symbolizes many unattained imperial ambitions such as a revitalized state repelling European encroachment and overturning Egyptian autonomy, the latter ironically commemorated in similar fashion in 1872: equestrian statues of Ibrahim Pasha and Muhammad Ali erected in Cairo and Alexandria respectively, both with pedestals bearing battles fought against the Ottomans.



6. The Turkish Sultan arriving in the carriage at the Paris World Fair in 1867 / [source](#).

DR. MÜGE ARSEVEN is a Lecturer in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University, where she received her PhD in the Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean in 2022. Her research focuses on ancient Greek art, architecture, and material culture as well as the reception of Mediterranean antiquity. From 2022 to 2024 she served as Curator of Antiquities at the Sadberk Hanım Museum in Istanbul. She holds undergraduate and MA degrees in architecture and architectural history from Istanbul Technical University and is Head Architect at the excavations of the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Onchestos, Boeotia.

JAKE BALLINGER

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CRUISING THE LACUNA: THE THEN AND THERE OF CAVAFY'S "CAESARION"



7. Konstantinos Kavafis, before 1933 / [source](#).

In C. P. Cavafy's "Caesarion" (1918), the poetic narrator addresses the apparition of the murdered boy-king, "I imagined you/so vividly last night, that when my lamp/went out—I let it go out on purpose—" and imagines him, "just as [he] would have looked in defeated Alexandria,/pale and tired, ideal in [his] sorrow."

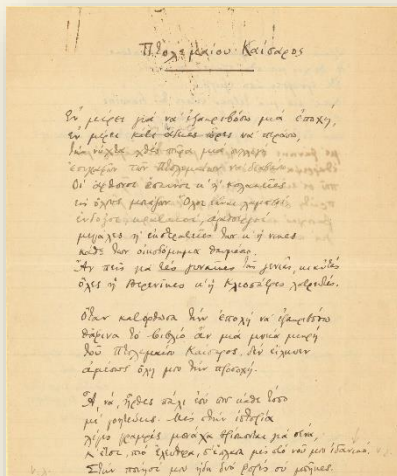
Contemporary Cavafy criticism, like Peter Jeffreys's *Reframing Decadence*, reads such poems through a Paterian genealogy of decadence in which "the desire of beauty [is] quickened by the sense of death," tracing the doomed Alexandrian's languor to Pre-Raphaelite pictorialism and Victorian Romanitas. While this frames the poem's mood, it never asks why the very unrememberedness of Caesarion might charge erotic desire.

I argue that this unrememberedness, "a brief mention/of King Caesarion, an insignificant note really," is erotic in Carson's sense, and that the imminence of Caesarion's death eroticizes him

in Bataille's sense. Taken together, the poem turns this productive erotic engine towards queer futurity and world-making legible as a Muñozian utopian horizon.

I locate this evidence in the lost optative mood which Cavafy's language periphrastically rebuilds (just as you would have looked/ως θα ήσουν; still hoping/ελπίζοντας ακόμη); this encourages us to refunction Tattersdill's counterfactual optative, following Sedgwick, into a reparative "optative" reading. I attend to the "fragments and part-objects [the reader] encounters or creates", toward the hope "that the future may be different from the present," which the poem locates in Caesarion's "still hoping for mercy from those vicious men".

The reparative "optative" reading offers a model for reading lacunary reception as future-oriented rather than elegiac: a way of reading how receptions reactivate a foreclosed past as futurity.



8. The manuscript of «Πτολεμαίου Καίσαρος», Cavafy Archive Onassis Foundation / [source](#).

JAKE BALLINGER is an MA student in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Taiwan University, where his research examines queer classical receptions in East Asian and European literary modernism. His work centers on the aestheticized male body, eros, and the temporalities of desire, reading figures such as Mishima Yukio, Cavafy, Virgil, and the Greek tragedians through queer theory and reception studies. He works primarily across English, French, Japanese, Latin, Ancient Greek, Italian Spanish, Portuguese, and Swedish.

ANNA BARANEK

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ROBOTS, SPIES AND GODS... MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURES AS FUTURISTIC DIGITAL BEINGS IN VIDEO GAMES

The presentation proposes a comparative analysis of two case studies showcasing how digital games engage with classical antiquity in futuristic settings, utilising mythological references to deepen their world-building and create a code of communicating with the player. By examining the games *Horizon: Zero Dawn* (as well as its sequel) and *007: First Light*, the presentation will explore how the mythological figures of Gaia and Theia are translated into modern digital constructs –a nurturing, terraforming AI and a cyber-surveillance network—via active ludic performance.

For the outlined purposes, the study employs a layered methodology combining Lorna Hardwick's model of classical reception with Ian Bogost's theory of procedural rhetorics, as well as Espen Aarseth's concept of ergodic textuality and Marie-Laure Ryan's idea of interactive narrative architecture. These perspectives will allow for an examination of not only how digital play affects classical reception, but also the narrative implications of naming powerful Artificial Intelligence systems after mythological figures.



9. *Horizon Zero Dawn* Steam materials / [source](#).



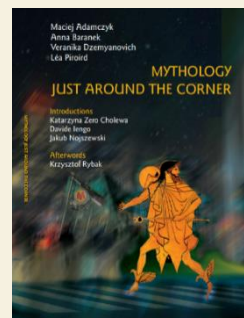
10. *007 First Light* Steam materials / [source](#).

By analysing the games' narrative layer in close connection to their gameplay mechanics, this study will showcase how storytelling and player agency transform the reception of Greco-Roman myth. Gaia's material and systemic representation will be compared to Theia's visual and informational power, and the presentation of both figures will also be analysed through looking at how it can be mediated

through user interface and core gameplay loops.

Ultimately, the presentation will showcase that video games do not just inherit antiquity, but that their underlying computational systems and player-driven requirements force audiences to actively perform, manipulate, and experience ancient myths within modern algorithmic realities.

ANNA BARANEK holds a master's degree in Cultural Studies – Mediterranean Civilization from the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" and is currently a PhD student at the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School of the University of Warsaw. Their research interests centre around the intersection between classical reception studies and game studies, particularly on examining how the interactivity specific to this form of media can inform modern interactions with broadly understood Classical Antiquity. Anna Baranek is also co-author of [Mitologia tuż za rogiem](#) short stories.



VIKTORYIA BARTSEVICH

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THE MOTIF OF KATABASIS IN *THE LITTLE BLACK HEN, OR THE UNDERGROUND PEOPLE* AND ITS ADAPTATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF CLASSICAL TRADITION



11. Editio princeps of *The Little Black Hen* / [source](#).

original, using fairy-tale aesthetics to depict the underground realm as a liminal space situated between childhood and maturation.

An important part of the paper will also be the analysis of the 1853 edition of the book² preserved in the University of Warsaw Library, considered in the context of the nineteenth-century children's book. The discussion will



13. Frame from the animation from 1975 dir. by Yuri Trofimov / [source](#).

This paper analyzes the motif of katabasis in *The Little Black Hen, or The Underground People*¹ by Antonij Pogorelski and its 1975 and 1980 screen adaptations, interpreting these works through the perspective of the reception of classical antiquity. Particular attention is devoted to the representation of the underground world and to the function of the protagonist's descent into a hidden reality, understood as both an initiatory and moral experience. Alyosha's journey is compared with classical models of katabasis present in Greek mythology and classical literature, especially the descents of Odysseus, Orpheus, and Aeneas into the world of the dead.

The analysis also examines the ways in which the film and animated adaptations develop and visualize motifs present in the literary



12. Poster of the film adaptation from 1980 / [source](#).

include such aspects as editorial form, illustrations, and the didactic function of the work.

The aim of the paper is to demonstrate how both Pogorelski and the creators of the screen adaptations transform the classical model of descent into the underworld into a literary and cinematic fairy tale intended for young audiences. The paper will also show that the motif of katabasis serves not only a narrative function in these works, but also a didactic one, becoming a means of portraying the protagonist's process of maturation.

VIKTORYIA BARTSEVICH, a graduate of the "Artes Liberales" Department and the Department of Archaeology, currently works in the 19th-Century Collections Office at the University Library in Warsaw. As part of her doctoral dissertation, she is conducting research on the ways death is portrayed in children's and young adult literature, with particular emphasis on the mythological motif of Hades and its symbolic and narrative functions. At the University of Warsaw Library, she is engaged in the bibliographic cataloguing of nineteenth-century books, including their description, verification of publication data, and historical and literary contextualization.

¹ Погорельский, А., *Чёрная курица, или Подземные жители : волшебная повесть для детей*, Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Н. Греча, 1829. First Polish edition 1950.

² Pogorel'skij A., „Sočineniâ”, Sanktpeterburg: Tipografiâ Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk, 1853.

TOBY BENDLE

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CHASING *KLEOS*:

THE PRESENCE OF 'HEAVY SPORTS' IN ANTIQUITY TO MODERN SPORTS

This research is aimed at examining the cultural relevance of 'heavy sports' in antiquity, and the renewed interest of the events in modern sports. 'Heavy Sports' were sporting events in ancient Greek competition that were largely dominated by larger and more powerful athletes, and were made up of Greek-style boxing, wrestling, and *pankration* (an amalgamation of striking and wrestling). The mythological origins of these fighting styles stem from the heroes Herakles and Theseus utilising these martial arts in their heroic labours; allegorically, the pure strength and power of the mighty and heroic over-malevolent forces, whereas in reality, these martial arts were unrefined fighting styles that found prowess in Greece. 'Heavy Sports' were brutal and ferocious events void of weight classes and were a spectacle of struggle (*agôn*); however, the combat mirrored the unarmed, last resort of the legendary demigods of Greece, and was the athletic pursuit of glory (*kleos*). Although only boxing maintained a more bloodthirsty presence in Rome, Greek heavy sports still maintained a nostalgic presence in the Empire, but fell into decline following the rise of Christianity. Boxing and wrestling once again saw widespread sporting competition in modernity 1904 American Olympics in a much safer capacity, but pankration failed to be reinstated. However, the growth of MMA, subsequent marketing, and the revival of modern pankration (albeit in a more diminished capacity) led to the Greek spirit of *pankration* and *kleos* being reborn. Through this presentation, I will highlight the history of heavy sports, and how their modern incarnations maintain the same concepts of glory and domination, and how they still uphold a history connected to antiquity.



14. Herakles wrestling with Antaios, black figured amphora, ca. 500 BC.
The British Museum no. 1843,1103.14, © The Trustees of the British Museum / [source](#).



15. Wrestling match during 1904 Summer Olympics in St. Louis / [source](#).

TOBY BENDLE is an MA History graduate from Cardiff University, with a background in studying ancient history. His academic highlights include studying ancient history and indigenous studies at Dalhousie University (Canada), speaking in front of his peers about Etruscan Heracle in the British Museum, and undertaking a self-funded research trip to Athens for his MA dissertation about Herakles in Attica. He is currently writing for various magazines and journals, and is planning on partaking a PhD in classical studies with a thesis surrounding the cultural presence of heavy sports in antiquity.

NATÁLIA FERREIRA DE CAMPOS

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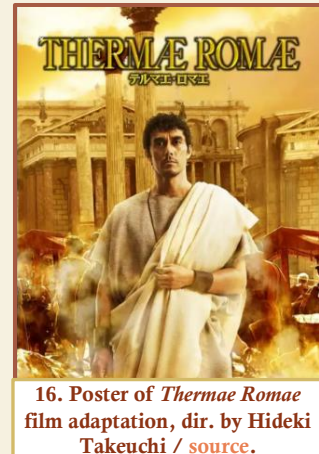
ANCIENT ROME MEETS CONTEMPORARY JAPAN:
REIMAGINING THE CLASSICAL PAST IN *THERMAE ROMAE*

This presentation examines the two-film adaptation of *Thermae Romae*, based on Mari Yamazaki's manga of the same name and released in 2012 and 2014. The first film, directed by Hideki Takeuchi, became the second highest-grossing domestic movie in Japan. *Thermae Romae* offers a humorous account of Lucius Modestus, a Roman architect specializing in the construction of bathhouses. Considered old-fashioned, Lucius finds himself struggling and, one day, is mysteriously transported through thermal waters to contemporary Japan. There, he encounters onsen and the innovations of Japanese bathing culture. Fascinated and bewildered by what he discovers, Lucius draws on these ideas to reinvent the Roman baths.

Historical narratives in novels, movies, and other media can both challenge and reinforce dominant versions of the past. By combining historical elements with science fiction and fantasy, time-travel stories offer new ways of engaging with the past from different perspectives.

Drawing on Reception Studies, this presentation seeks to understand how *Thermae Romae* connects ancient Rome and contemporary Japan in ways that challenge traditional models of Classical Reception and open up new ways of imagining the classical past. The adaptation subverts a range of expectations concerning the past and its relationship to the present. First, it reverses the traditional hierarchical relationship between past and present by assigning the present a central role in this dynamic. At the same time, it plays with audience expectations about who can be recognized as Roman, exploring the unfamiliarity stemming from Japanese actors portraying both Roman and Japanese characters. Language also plays an important role: the relationship between Latin and Japanese unfolds in unexpected ways. In Rome, Lucius speaks Japanese, when he travels to Japan, he speaks Latin. These elements challenge audience expectations and invite audiences to reconsider how the past is represented, while also highlighting the inevitably anachronistic nature of any relationship with the past.

The film also engages with Hollywood epics and more recent productions such as *Gladiator*. By revisiting and subverting characteristic elements of these productions, *Thermae Romae* offers a counterpoint to representations that have contributed to popular perceptions of Rome that remain widespread today. In this sense, *Thermae Romae* offers a compelling case through which to examine these issues, allowing traditional views of the ancient Roman world to be questioned and challenged.



16. Poster of *Thermae Romae* film adaptation, dir. by Hideki Takeuchi / source.

NATALIA FERREIRA DE CAMPOS is a postdoctoral researcher at the Federal University of São Paulo. She holds a PhD in Cultural History from the University of Campinas (UNICAMP, Brazil). Her research focuses on the reception of Classical Antiquity, particularly in historical fiction and popular culture. Her doctoral research examined the reception of the late Roman Republic and the Principate in twenty-first-century historical novels, with particular attention to questions of gender, sexuality, and identity. Her current project explores the reception of ancient Rome in Japan, with a particular focus on manga. She previously taught Ancient History and Prehistory at the Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG) and has collaborated with the Public Archaeology Laboratory (LAP/NEPAM/UNICAMP).

ANGELINA GERUS

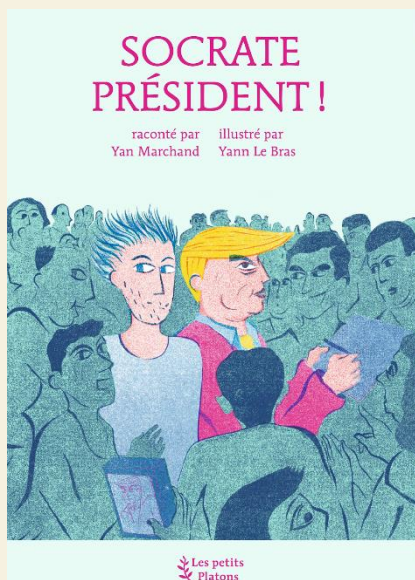
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MAKING ATHENS GREAT AGAIN?

OR, THE SOCRATES–GORGIAS ELECTION MATCHUP IN *SOCRATE PRÉSIDENT* !

This paper examines Yan Marchand and Yann Le Bras's *Socrate Président* ! as a contemporary reimagining of Plato's *Gorgias*, transforming philosophical dialogue into a political fable for young and crossover readers. The book begins with Plato's myth of the judgement of naked souls: faced with an overcrowded Tartarus, Minos brings Socrates back from the dead so that he may become president, introduce just laws, and make human beings better. As Socrates cannot appeal to a mass audience, the sophist Gorgias is also revived to teach him political persuasion...



17. Book cover of Yan Marchand's *Socrate Président* ! from 2017 / [source](#).

With his swept-over blond hair, prominent eyebrows, and sharply tailored suit, Gorgias is difficult not to recognize as—at the very least—a doppelgänger of Donald Trump. Both this visual resemblance and the way he conducts politics immediately place the ancient sophist within the context of contemporary populism. The new *Gorgias* appropriates the campaign and wins through slogans, screens, and promises, yet remains true to what he has always been: a rhetorician who adopts a pragmatic understanding of speech and values persuasion and its effect on the crowd above truth. People follow him readily, and the task of increasing the number of just souls remains with Socrates.



18. Donald Trump, phot. by Damon Winter/The New York Times / [source](#).

I argue that the book creates an alternative political world not to propose an alternative political system, but to expose the incompatibility between Socratic (or Platonic?) ethical formation and contemporary mass democracy. Its reality is fictional: ancient philosophers return from the dead, Minos governs the afterlife, and smartphones become versions of Plato's Cave. Yet its political mechanisms remain familiar. The book thus tests whether ethics can function within institutions governed by publicity, persuasion, consumerism, and electoral competition. The book thus tests whether ethics can function within institutions governed by publicity, persuasion, consumer desire, and electoral competition. In Plato's time as in our own, philosophy can prevent democracy from descending into tyranny only if it learns to operate within human desires without compromising truth—and perhaps aspires not to enthrone a philosopher-king, but to elect Socrates president.

ANGELINA GERUS is a classicist whose work lies at the intersection of philology, philosophy and cultural studies. Her scholarly interests include texts by Greek and Roman thinkers and their later reception. Her current work focuses on Greek literature of the Roman Imperial period, with particular attention to animal imagery. More specifically, she is involved in the study of conceptual metaphors in the Plutarchan corpus as a member of the “[Thinking of Thinking...](#)” project, which combines close textual analysis with broader questions about ancient thought, language and visual imagination.

The latest release of the popular city-building videogame series *Anno*, *Anno 117: Pax Romana* (Ubisoft Mainz, 2025), is set in 117 CE and casts players as a Roman governor responsible for developing prospering islands both in ‘Latium’ and ‘Albion’ by organizing production, satisfying social needs, and managing cultural relations between ‘Latium’ and ‘Albion’. Thus, it transforms the Roman Empire into a playable imagined world in which “peace” functions both as an aesthetic promise and a political problem. The game imagines antiquity primarily through urban planning and the management of imperial order rather than military conquest. Its campaign also offers a choice between the siblings Marcus Naukratius and Marcia Tertia, the latter presented as a woman advancing within a male-dominated imperial society, thereby inviting reflection on Roman authority and gender hierarchy. At the same time, the game raises questions about social realities less easily integrated into city-building, above all slavery, which is acknowledged narratively but remains marginal within the playable social order.



19. Ubisoft downloadable fun sets / [source](#).

Our focus lies on the game’s reception of the Imperium Romanum as a cultural and ideological construct. Ubisoft’s development commentary explicitly references Tacitus’ critique of Roman imperialism — *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant* (Tac. Agr. 1,30) (“they make a desert and call it peace”) — framing the concept of peace as contested rather than neutral. This tension is translated into city-building mechanics: prosperity emerges through roads, temples, production chains, and expanding settlements, yet remains tied to questions of cultural assimilation, provincial governance, and the costs of stability.

Drawing on digital classical reception studies, we ask what image of Roman antiquity the game ultimately conveys and how the city-building genre shapes contemporary imaginations of empire, prosperity, cultural integration, hierarchical structures and latent imperial violence.

GABRYEL GRECO is a doctoral researcher and PhD-student at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz. His doctoral thesis deals with the reception of Lucan’s epic *Bellum Civile* during the so called ‘wars of religion’ in early modern France, especially within the epic *Les Tragiques* by Agrippa d’Aubigné. His main research focuses and interests are Roman epic and its reception, early modern literature in France and Italy as well as neo-Latin studies.

MATTHIAS HEINEMANN is a postdoctoral researcher at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, where he works on the project “Lebenshilfe in Ancient Rome,” exploring ancient practices of consolation, self-care, and moral guidance. His research focuses on Roman epic, Cicero, the reception of antiquity, and Latin prose and poetry of the late Republic and early Imperial period. His dissertation examined Lucan and Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*, with particular attention to intertextuality and narrative techniques in the representation of civil war.

ZSÓFIA HORVÁTH

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AN ANIMAL MYTH: THE APPEARANCE OF THE HEDGEHOG AND THE APPLE THROUGHOUT THE AGES

In my presentation, I aim to introduce a cultural phenomenon that survived for centuries due to a false idea in ancient natural history works, to highlight how the traditions, worldviews and observations of antiquity still animate, shape our world today and its legacy is reflected in our everyday lives, including art. In children's fairy tales, drawings, and cartoons, hedgehogs are often depicted with an apple or some kind of other fruit on their back. The starting point of my research was the question why this image appears in some modern depictions, although it is unrealistic, even outright excluded: the idea, despite its fictitiousness, often appears in various cultural media, for example, in animal tales. Among the extant sources, according to my research, the idea first appears in *Naturalis Historia*, the work of Pliny the Elder. After pinpointing that, I considered it important to examine the individual stages of the process, thereby gaining a more detailed insight into the problem. In my presentation, I will examine the passages dealing with hedgehogs in the natural history works of three imperial authors, Pliny, Plutarch and Aelian, then the medieval reception of these passages in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, and in various bestiaries. In the final section of the presentation, I will discuss the modern and contemporary reception of the appearance of hedgehogs.



21. Guillaume le Clerc, « Bestiaire divin », BnF-MSS. Français 14969, f.21v, Bibliothèque nationale de France / [source](#).

ZSÓFIA HORVÁTH is currently a BA student in the Department of Egyptology at the Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, and previously did a BA and MA degree in the Department of Classical Philology and Neo-Latin Studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Szeged. Her research focuses on animal symbolisms throughout different eras and cultures, primarily on hedgehogs.



20. The hedgehog from « Le Bestiaire d'amour », ms. Français 1951, f.22v, Bibliothèque nationale de France / [source](#).



22. The hedgehog from the Bestiary BnF-MSS. Latin 14429, f.110r, Bibliothèque nationale de France / [source](#).

DAVIDE IENGO

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RE-IMAGINING BRISEIS: THE RECEPTION OF THE TROJAN CYCLE THROUGH ITS FEMALE CHARACTERS IN PETERSEN AND BENIOFF'S FILM *TROY* (2004)

Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* (2004) has been widely criticized for its divergences from Homer's *Iliad*, yet such criticism often overlooks the internal narrative coherence sustaining the film's most significant departures from the source text. This paper examines one of the most striking of these departures: the radical reimagining of Briseis (Rose Byrne), transformed from a nearly silent war prize in the *Iliad* into a central, autonomous, and dramatically active figure in the film's economy.

Drawing on close readings of key Homeric passages — Achilles' declaration of affection at *Il.*



23. Poster of the theatrical release of *Troy* from 2004, Warner Bros. Pictures / [source](#).

IX 335-43, and Briseis' funerary lament over Patroclus at *Il.* XIX 287-300 — the paper argues that Petersen and Benioff's rewriting is less a betrayal of the original than a purposeful conflation of several Homeric female figures, most notably Chryseis, Andromache, and Clytaemnestra, into a single character. This operation, while cinematically motivated, finds unexpected points of contact with the *Iliad* itself, where Briseis and Chryseis are already narratologically “interchangeable”, as Redfield (2021) has observed.

The paper further explores the structural symmetries Petersen constructs around the four figures of Achilles, Briseis, Patroclus, and Hector — linked by kinship bonds, parallel losses, and a shared *Leitmotiv* of resistance to established authority — and situates Briseis' killing of Agamemnon within this framework as a culminating act of both political transgression and romantic agency.

The elimination

of divine intervention from the narrative is also considered as a key contextual factor shaping Briseis' expanded role.

The paper ultimately contends that Petersen's Briseis, however distant from her Homeric counterpart, constitutes a coherent and critically productive rewriting of the ancient figure, attuned to the film's central humanising ambition.



24. Brian Cox as Agamemnon and Rose Byrne as Briseis in *Troy* (2004) / [source](#).

DAVIDE IENGO is an alumnus of the University of Pisa and of the Scuola Normale Superiore, where he obtained a Master's degree in Classical Philology; his main interests revolve around ancient Greek poetry (Aristophanes, Bakchylides, Anacreon, Homer), prose (Herodotus, Lysias), and translation as a form of reception of classical antiquity, strongly linked to his passion for languages and the cultural connections established by and through them.

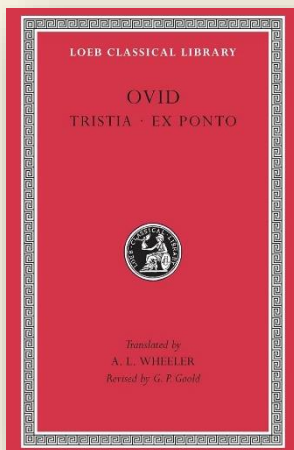
STAMATIA KITSOU

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IN TOTO PLURIMUS ORBE LEGOR (TRIST. 4.10.128): IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE PASTS, PRESENTS, AND FUTURES IN OVID'S EXILE POETRY

Ovid's exile poetry (*Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*) is profoundly shaped by counterfactual imagination, as the poet repeatedly reconstructs unrealized pasts and envisages alternative futures in an attempt to come to terms with the rupture caused by banishment. His removal from Rome constitutes a deep personal and social dislocation, only partially alleviated through imagined returns to the city and through persistent reflections on what might have been: what if he had not committed his fatal error, if Augustus had shown clemency, or if he had remained in Rome. Against this backdrop, Tomis is portrayed as a dystopian space marked by perpetual winter, barbarian incursions, linguistic estrangement, and social isolation.



25. Book cover of *Tristia* / [source](#).



26. Statue of Ovid in Constanța, Romania, created in 1887 by the Italian sculptor Ettore Ferrari / [source](#).

As a counterweight to the hardships of exile, Ovid engages in deliberate acts of imaginative participation in conversations, festivals, and other public occasions, through which he maintains both an intellectual and an emotional presence within the Roman community. Yet as the prospect of a physical return gradually recedes, he increasingly projects himself toward a future readership. The exile corpus thereby articulates a vision of literary immortality through which the poet transcends the spatial and temporal limits imposed by banishment, ensuring his continued presence among successive generations of readers *in urbe et orbe*.

STAMATIA KITSOU holds a Bachelor's degree in Classical Philology and two Master's degrees, in Ancient Theatre and Classical Philology respectively. She received my PhD in Classics from the University of Patras in 2019. Her RESEARCH INTERESTS include Ancient Greek and Roman Bucolic Poetry; Augustan Poetry; Ancient Greek and Roman Comedy; Theatre of the Imperial Era; Mime; Reception Studies.

KAROLINA ANNA KULPA

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HOW DOES CLEOPATRA BECOME A HEROINE OF THE FUTURE?

CLEOPATRA IN SPACE AND THE CULTURAL BIOGRAPHY OF THE ANCIENT QUEEN

Cleopatra VII has already been a queen, a seductress, a political strategist, a tragic lover, and a popular culture celebrity. In *Cleopatra in Space*, she becomes something else: the heroine of a science fiction adventure set in a world of flying sphinxes, powerful feline advisers, futuristic academies, and intergalactic conflict.

This paper explores a new chapter in Cleopatra's cultural biography. In Mike Maihack's graphic novel series *Cleopatra in Space* (2014–2020) and its animated adaptation (2020–2021), the last ruler of Ptolemaic Egypt is reimagined for children and young adults. Her story centres on friendship, responsibility, leadership, self-discovery, and the prevention of a galactic catastrophe. Instead of ruling Egypt, Cleopatra must learn how to lead, make difficult decisions, and protect the world around her.

The analysis focuses on several interconnected questions. How is Cleopatra reshaped when she enters a universe governed by the conventions of science fiction, adventure storytelling, and young adult fiction? What happens when one of antiquity's most recognisable female figures becomes the central character in a story about the future? Which elements of Cleopatra's cultural image make her a convincing heroine for such a story?



27. The cover of the first book in the *Cleopatra in Space* book series by Mike Maihack / [source](#).



28. Title card of the 2019 Dreamworks animated TV series / [source](#).

Drawing on classical reception studies, children's culture studies, and transmedia storytelling, I examine both the graphic novels and the animated adaptation. Particular attention is paid to how motifs associated with Cleopatra are adapted to the needs of contemporary children's and young adult culture. The franchise expands Cleopatra's cultural biography by assigning her new roles and meanings while preserving her recognisability as a cultural figure.

In a universe where sphinxes traverse the skies, cats hold positions of authority, and ancient technologies enable journeys through time,

what does Cleopatra's latest transformation reveal about the kinds of heroines contemporary culture imagines for younger audiences?

KAROLINA ANNA KULPA (PhD, 2017) is a cultural scholar and historian specialising in classical reception studies, with a particular focus on Cleopatra VII and her representations in popular culture. She has published numerous articles and a monograph on Cleopatra (2021) and has participated in international interdisciplinary research projects, including the University of Warsaw's *Our Mythical Childhood* (2017–2021). An experienced educator, she combines academic research with teaching practice. Since October 2025, she has been a lecturer in the Department of Creative Media at Collegium Da Vinci in Poznań.

RAQUEL MACIÁ BURGUEÑO

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THE SYMBOLISM OF THE EYES IN THE MYTH OF ACTAEON AND *MORT D'ACTEON*:
A COMPARATIVE AND PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY

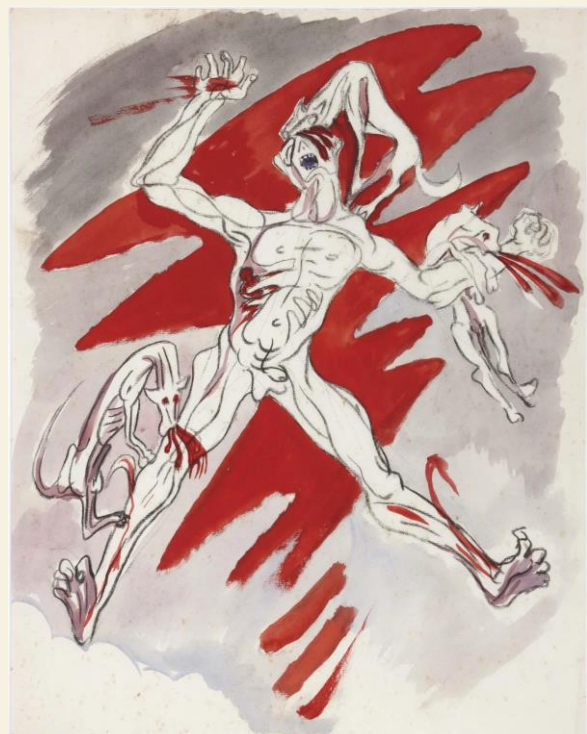
The myth of Actaeon recounts the punishment imposed by Diana on the hunter Actaeon after she discovered him watching her and her attendants bathing naked. Diana transformed Actaeon into a stag, and he was subsequently devoured by his own hounds, who failed to recognize him. The death of Actaeon is a classical myth, most famously transmitted through Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, that has persisted throughout the cultural tradition to the present day. Like many classical myths, it has been represented and reinterpreted across different historical periods and artistic media.

A comparative methodology allows for the analysis of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, with particular attention to the process of transduction, understood as the creation of a new text or cultural product from a previous one. From this perspective, the artwork is considered a sign that engages in dialogue with other works within the cultural tradition through different artistic codes, including literary language and painting. André Masson's *Mort d'Actéon* (1936) participates in this cultural and pictorial tradition by offering a reinterpretation of the myth. Masson depicts Actaeon in human form while being attacked by his hounds, which drain his blood and bite out his eyes.

This presentation pursues two main objectives. First, it establishes an interartistic analysis between the textual source of the myth and its pictorial representation, paying special attention to the depiction of the eyes and the symbolism associated with them and with Diana's punishment.

Second, drawing on Freud's theories of the uncanny and castration—which posit a close relationship between the fear of eye mutilation and castration anxiety—it proposes a psychoanalytic interpretation according to which Diana punishes Actaeon's lustful gaze by depriving him of his eyes, thereby enacting both the physical and symbolic castration of the character.

RAQUEL MACIÁ is a PhD candidate conducting her doctoral research under a cotutelle agreement between the University of Oviedo—where she is employed as a predoctoral researcher—and the University of Bologna, with a scholarship from the Real Colegio de España. Her PhD project examines the role of emotions in the semiotic and literary creative process, exploring how they structure the text and construct meaning, as well as how they shape readers' experiences by influencing perception, interpretation, and emotional response. Framed within the interdisciplinary framework of neurocognitive poetics, this study combines approaches from literary theory, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and cultural rhetoric.



29. *Mort d'Actéon* (Death of Actaeon) by André Masson,
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía / [source](#).

SOFÍA AILIN PARRELLA

Universidad de Buenos Aires

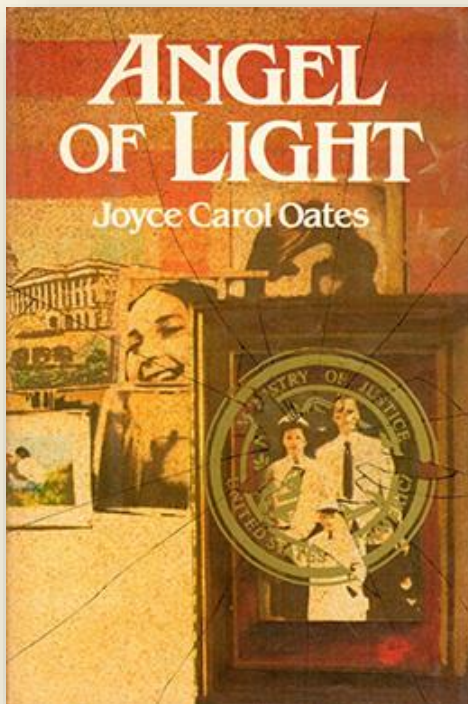
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CLYTEMNESTRA'S SILENCE: ORDER AND CHAOS IN GREEK TRAGEDY
AND JOYCE CAROL OATES'S *ANGEL OF LIGHT*

Angel of Light (1981) by Joyce Carol Oates functions not merely as an adaptation of the Atreidae's myth, but as a critical reading of the classical tradition itself, one that exposes the patriarchal foundations of Western notions of justice, order, and political legitimacy. Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, Sophocles's *Electra*, and (to a lesser extent) Euripides's *Electra*, three tragedies about the House of Atreus, stage the killing of Clytemnestra as a necessary act of restoration for the polis. Yet, beneath the apparent resolution of each finale, a residual disorder persists: the civic and divine institutions that legitimize Orestes's matricide cannot fully explain the violence they sanction, nor can they silence the ethical claims that Clytemnestra's death leaves open. This paper argues that these tragic endings do not resolve the conflict they

dramatize but rather suppress it, producing what we can identify as a "contained chaos" that the patriarchal framework of each text requires but cannot acknowledge.

Reading Oates's postmodern novel as a rewriting of this mythological tradition, I examine how Oates makes this suppressed disorder visible. Where Greek tragedy constructs Clytemnestra as a monstrous transgressor whose elimination founds civic rationality, Oates strips that construction of its ideological scaffolding, revealing it as a fiction sustained by the subordination of the feminine and the monopolization of logos by masculine authority. Through the lens of metafiction and gender theory, this paper traces the transformations that Clytemnestra undergoes across the three tragedies and into Oates's novel, attending to the silencing of female voices, the regulation of female desire, and the specific mechanisms by which each text forecloses the ethical claims of the matricide's victim.



30. Book cover of *Angel of Light* from 1981 / [source](#).

SOFÍA AILIN PARRELLA is a BA and Professor of Letters from the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), where she is currently a doctoral research fellow (UBACyT) at the Instituto de Filología Clásica "Dra. Alicia Schniebs" and a PhD student in Classical Letters (FFyL, UBA). She has published essays and presented papers at international conferences in comparative literature, North American literature, and classical studies. She currently works as a high school teacher and literature promoter, through *Nocturnas Podcast*, which produces content about female writers, organizes reading clubs, writing workshops, and feminist theory seminars.

THESHIRA PATHER

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SYMPATHY FOR THE MONSTER: DEMYTHOLOGISING AND HUMANISING THE MINOTAUR IN *KAOS*

This paper investigates the reception of the Minotaur in *KAOS* (2024), and argues that the Cretan monster is demythologised, humanised, and granted personhood and agency in the show. Through an examination of the ancient sources for the Minotaur, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* 10, Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*, and Catullus' *Poem* 64, I will argue that it is often depicted as a liminal, othered being who does not possess an individual personhood beyond that of a monster within Theseus' story, and yet, especially with the Roman poets such as Catullus and Ovid, it is sometimes viewed with sympathy (see Hays 2019,



32. The Minotaur / Asterius in *Hades* digital game / [source](#).



31. Fady Elsayed as the Minotaur / Glaucus in *KAOS* / [source](#).

pp. 46–51, Peyronie 2015, pp. 814–821, Little 2015, pp. 13–23, Posthumus 2011, chapter 5e).

This study explores how *KAOS* endows the Minotaur, known as Glaucus in the show, with an individual identity, a humanity, and the agency to fight against the designation of monster. Further, it is argued that *KAOS* positions the Minotaur as central to the empowerment of Ariadne and the enabling of her agency, as an important part of the show's overarching satirical critique of corrupt authoritarian powers (both human and divine) and its focus on the theme of *hubris*, both

in the sense of excessive pride and defiance towards the divine (see Baranek and Olechowska 2024, pp. 123–156, Puga 2025, pp. 372–390). A brief look at the Minotaur in Supergiant's acclaimed game *Hades* (2020), which also explores the Cretan Minotaur and issues of personhood and agency, will demonstrate an ongoing fascination with the Minotaur and a desire to demythologise and/or humanise this traditionally monstrous figure.

THESHIRA PATHER began her studies in Classics in 2015 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. In 2026, she completed her PhD in Classics at the University of Edinburgh with a thesis entitled *Reclaiming Briseis' Narrative: Homer, Ovid, and Three Modern Novels*. She is interested in the reception of antiquity in modern literature and media, including film, games, and alternative media such as YouTube. Of particular interest are female agency, the liminality of beings, modern interpretations of Homeric narrators, the reception of Greco-Roman monsters, and how modern creators use the ancient world to respond to modern sociopolitical concerns.

TY PATTERSON

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CLAW MARKS ON THE RUNWAY: THE MYTHIC HYBRIDITY OF WOMEN
IN MUGLER'S *LES CHIMÈRES*

Thierry Mugler's 1997 Fall/Winter couture collection, *Les Chimères*, is a cornerstone of the French designer's legacy as one of the fashion figureheads of the late-20th century. Scales, feathers, and tentacles blend with cinched armor, corsetry, and the "hyper-femininity" that defined the mid-1990s runway, with Mugler using Greek visions of monstrosity in order to costume a caricaturized image of women's bodies. Situated within the generation of designers at the turn of the century known for "homeovestism," in which women "drag up" in an exaggerated parody of their own sex as defined by patriarchal standards (Evans, Caroline. 2003. 122), *Les Chimères* employs classical images of female hybridity to explore the enduring cultural fear and allure surrounding women who transgress the boundaries of the body set by their society.

Like Medusa, whose terrifying gaze is noted by Freud for making men hard as stone, or the sphinx, whose animalistic physicality enables her sexual dominance in Greek art, Mugler's reworked image of the woman of the future mirrors this dual eroticism and lethality. In transforming their exteriority through clothing, the women of *Les Chimères* initiate a new ontological "becoming" into some (de)evolved species of woman that threatens to entice, consume, and supplant men, highlighting the ancient pressures that persist about the policing of women's bodies. Yet, by allowing the modern woman to disembed herself from a traditionally disciplined body, Mugler uses ancient iconography to explore a "Nietzschean transvaluation," in which the minority class's exclusion from dominant culture enables them to deterritorialize themselves from the mainstream in order to establish their own values (Seely, Stephen D. 2012. 252). In examining women's access to power through this route of monstrosity, Mugler reimagines and glorifies ancient feminine hybridity, using the transformative power of clothing to interrogate the borders placed on what is considered acceptably feminine.



33. La Chimère collection, haute couture fall 1997 /
[source.](#)

TY PATTERSON is a second-year M.A. student at the University of Georgia studying Greek and Latin, having previously earned his B.A. in Classical Civilizations from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research interests include ancient dress and weaving, gender and identity, performance, Plato, and classical reception. While at UNC-Chapel Hill, he completed an honors thesis on the transformation of "othered" women's identities in Euripides through costuming. He is currently writing an M.A. thesis about the role of immigrants within the katabatic structure of Plato's *Republic*.

HELENA POWER

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THE PARTHENON MARBLES AS FRAGMENTED TEMPORALITIES IN CLASSICAL RECEPTION

This is a Museum Studies and Classical Reception presentation. The research addresses whether or not (and to what extent) the Parthenon Marbles are fragmented temporalities in the British Museum and the New Acropolis Museum. I examine the contextualization from different angles, through a consideration of different types of contexts, such as ancient Athenian, museum-specific, archaeological, architectural, environmental, and viewing/experiential ones. All these types are significant to my evaluation of how the museums display and possess the Marbles. That is, I examine contextualisation from different angles.

My overarching argument is that the Marbles are fragmented pieces that have been disconnected from their ancient Athenian context. With my focus on contexts, I steer away from the heated repatriation debate. I discuss in depth the history and character of the British Museum and apply Richard Neer's concept of wonder (as outlined in the seminal book *The Emergence of the Classical Style*) to its Parthenon Marbles Gallery.

The Marbles were once part of the ancient temple on the Athenian Acropolis, symbolising fifth-century Athenian prosperity and power. The Parthenon was a treasure house dedicated to housing the treasury of the Delian League. Richard Neer emphasises correctly that the Parthenon was a sacred strongbox with connections of religion, economics, and sovereignty attached to the building.

Since 1962, the Marbles have been housed in the British Museum's Duveen Gallery. Far away from their original context, they matter as objects of world culture within an encyclopaedic museum that allows visitors to understand the world they live in. In the New Acropolis Museum, I argue that while the Marbles are fragmented pieces, they have intense, wondrous effects, reflections and sensorial experiences. I conclude that, to a considerable extent, the Marbles are far more in context in the New Acropolis Museum based on how the museum utilises natural Attic light and wondrous effects.



34. Parthenon Marbles, The British Museum, phot. by Marta Pszczolińska.

HELENA POWER is a postgraduate student in Public History at St. Mary's University Twickenham. She graduated from the University of Roehampton in 2025 with a first-class degree in Classical Studies. The paper she is presenting derives from her BA undergraduate dissertation in Classical Art. Katerina Volioti was her dissertation supervisor for the project. Helena's broader academic interests in public history are rooted in cultural heritage, museum curation, and historical memory. In June 2026, she participated in an online conference for the University of Reading's launch of *Astyanax* magazine.

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ACHILLES, HERCULES, AND THE ALIENS:
MODELLING A NEW HERO OF THE SPACE RACE ERA IN COMMUNIST POLAND

The space exploration boom in the 1960s and 70s was not only a matter of a technological race between the USA and the USSR, but it was also strongly embedded in children's culture. In the Polish People's Republic the press and television dominated with their accounts of the superiority and the triumph of Soviet science and technology, but there was also demand for science fiction literature, stories and tales, which were popular among readers.



35. Illustration by Waldemar Andrzejewski presenting Achilles, Hercules and the Doctor, *Plomyczek* 1 (1974).

In 1974 the fortnightly children's magazine *Plomyczek* printed a cosmic tale by Jerzy Jesionowski, a member of the Polish United Workers' Party, awarded many prizes for his plays and novels by the communist authorities. The plot described an impossible mission to a remote planet featuring the greatest mythical heroes, Achilles and Heracles, along with a modern scientist, the Doctor. Since 1963, Jesionowski had used and developed the theme of this space tale in his plays staged in theatres across Poland and East Germany. However, his adaptation for *Plomyczek* could reach a considerably broader child audience as the magazine was published

in print runs of over half a million (600 375 units).

The presentation showcases how the author used the Campbellian pattern to construct the plot, but most importantly focuses on the image of a new era hero offered to the young readers. The analysis compares and contrasts the ancient, modern, and futuristic themes which Jesionowski used, modified and rejected in order to shape the character who could have been a role model for the children of People's Poland. The presentation also highlights the impact of the colonialist discourse on the depiction of the Other, here represented by the inhabitants of the planet Octavia. Robotic-electric Aliens, despite their technological advancements, are simultaneously treated as a 'primitive' indigenous society. The protagonists do not engage in a cultural dialogue with locals, but rather strive to defeat, outsmart and use them.



36. Hercules hit by an electrical charge, *Plomyczek* 2 (1974).

MARTA PSZCZOLIŃSKA is an alumna of Cultural Studies – Mediterranean Civilization at the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” at the University of Warsaw where she worked within the project *Our Mythical Childhood...*, and later within *The Modern Argonauts* ERC Grant. Her main interest covers the reception of Greek and Roman Antiquity in Polish children's and teenagers' literature, animation, and educational materials of the 20th century, especially in the period of communist Poland (1945–1989). She led the project *Classical Antiquity in Periodicals for Children and Young Adults in the Polish People's Republic (PRL)* funded by the National Science Center (NCN).

LICYA DOS SANTOS RIOS

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AFRICAN HERITAGE: ANDROMEDA'S MYTH FROM OVID'S POETRY

This research proposes a critical approach on Andromeda's myth, better known by the constellation that bears her name than as an Aethiopian princess, whose literary and iconographic representations oscillate between presenting her as a black woman and as a white woman. In the mythological complex of the hero Perseus, the beautiful Andromeda appears as a woman, so still that could be compared to a marble statue, rescued from the sea monster (Ov. *Met.* IV.675), although in Ovid's poetry she appears *fusca* (Ov. *Ars* III.191), rather than most representations of the myth. The character's origins is not enough to solve this issue, since the imaginary around Aethiopia also oscillates between myth and history. But, Andromeda's myth has been recently reappropriated to discuss whitewashing and the presence of Africa in Western civilization. Therefore, to investigate what means this shifting of Andromeda's representations, Critical Classical Reception Studies is our approach, that acknowledges the Greek and Roman Antiquity constructing structural violences and its subsequent translations, critics and receptions. And it's a particular interest to this research to analyze above all else the myth's reception on contemporary Ethiopia through the art collective Yatreda ያጥፊዳ (2022), that rescues Andromeda's African heritage.



37. Videoframe 10737 from *The Sacrifice of Andromeda* by Yatreda / source.

LICYA DOS SANTOS RIOS – Undergraduate degrees in Latin and Portuguese from Federal Fluminense University (UFF). Master's student from the Graduate Program in Literature Studies at Federal Fluminense University (POSLIT-UFF). Her academic research, under the supervision of professor Renata Cazarini de Freitas (POSLIT-UFF), centers on the re-reading of excerpts from Ovid's poetry, by specificities of the speeches of female characters with a Critical Classical Reception approach.

MARTA DE SEVILLA GARCIA

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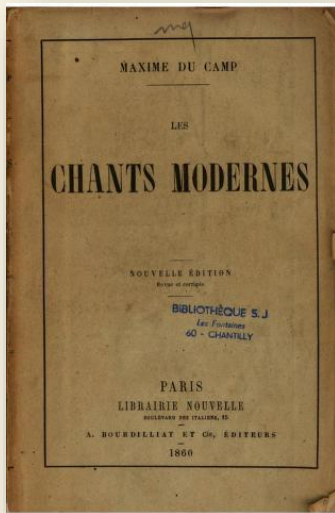
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ANTIQUITY IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEBATE ON INDUSTRIALISATION: DISCOURSES ON THE INVENTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

In 1855, the writer and photographer Maxime Du Camp published *Les chants modernes*, a critique of the literature of his time, which he described as “gerontocratic,” “clad in worn-out togas,” and afflicted by an “epidemic of the cult of the old.” Contrary to the aesthetic ideals

that would soon be associated with Parnassianism, Du Camp championed industry as a legitimate subject for artists and presented the future as a break with—or transcendence of—Classical Antiquity.

To fully understand this work, it is necessary to situate it within the context of nineteenth-century debates on industrialisation and to explore how references to the ancient world functioned as models—or counter-models—in the construction of modern imaginaries. On the one hand, Antiquity serves to articulate a critique of industrial transformation: the future appears to be built upon the destruction of a natural and bucolic world associated with the classical past. The image of a “sooty Acheron” functions simultaneously as a metaphor for the aesthetic of the daguerreotype and for the growth of urban pollution. On the other hand, authors such as Du Camp developed a conception of history based on progress, in which new inventions and professions would redefine the relationship



38. Book cover of *Chants Modernes* from 1860 / [source](#).

between human beings and nature. Figures such as the photographer are portrayed as the new Icarus who, far from being punished for their hubris, succeed in mastering the forces of nature through technology.

In this regard, this contribution will examine such contrasting appropriations of Antiquity in discourses on industrialisation which focus on the invention of photography. Attention will also be paid to the role played in these debates by utopian socialism and, more specifically, by Saint-Simonian thought, a movement with which Du Camp was closely associated. The paper will therefore explore how the classical past became a resource for the construction of imagined futures that promoted a transformative relationship with reality.

MARTA DE SEVILLA GARCIA is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Classical Philology (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) and a member of the research project *Marginalia Classica IV. Classical Marginalities and their Reception in Contemporary Mass Culture: Escapism and Resistance* (PID2023-150513NB-I00). Her doctoral dissertation, “*A Sooty Acheron*”. *Imaginaries of Antiquity in the Origins of Photography*, explores how references to Greek and Roman Antiquity shaped nineteenth-century discourses on photography. Recent publication: de Sevilla García M. (2025). “[Ancient Dance through the Camera: Fin-de-Siècle Encounters between Academic Research and Choreographic Practice](#)”. *Anales de Historia del Arte*, 35, 255–272.

LIAM SHIROM

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UNLADYLIKE: THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE RAGE IN GREEK TRAGEDY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING GENDER ROLES, MORALITY, AND JUSTICE IN ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY



39. Statue of Euripides, Louvre Museum, no. Ma 343 (LL 15), phot. by Jastrow / [source](#).

a world governed by patriarchal norms and translates her emotions into actions of defiance that challenge the boundaries between victimhood and power, and the masculine and feminine emotions. I argue that through these powerful emotional expressions, Greek tragedy offers a critique of gender dynamics.

LIAM SHIROM is currently a MA student in Classical Studies at Bar-Ilan University, writing her thesis under the supervision of prof. Lisa Maurice. Her thesis examines representation of ‘female rage’ in Greek tragedy, in comparison with the historical realities of women in the classical period. She did her BA at Tel-Aviv University in Classical Studies and Philosophy.

Fifth-century BCE Athens was a crucial period in shaping the concept of the private and public spheres, providing an essential context for Greek tragedy where the tension between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ emotions play a central role. Tragedy often revolves around exceptional figure, whose extraordinary circumstances or characteristics defy societal norms and embody cultural anxieties. Female characters in tragedy disrupt societal norms, embody cultural anxieties and reflect broader questions about justice and order. Female rage in Greek tragedies often transcends personal vengeance, becoming a means to challenge societal expectations of women’s behaviour, family roles, and moral boundaries. The portrayal of women’s anger and rage in tragedy highlights these complexities, embodying this tension – such as Medea’s. A strong woman and a former princess, driven by despair, frustration, anger, and fear, transcend the stereotypical limitations, sometimes usurping traditional male roles completely.

I will explore how Medea navigates her emotions within



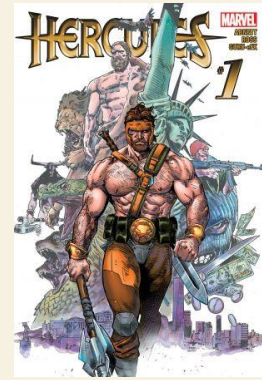
40. Red-figure calyx-krater: Medea in chariot, c. 400 BCE, The Cleveland Museum of Art / [source](#).

MERCÉDESZ STOCKER

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MYTH IN TRANSITION: THE CLASSICAL RECEPTION OF HERACLES IN MARVEL'S
HERCULES (2016)

Greek mythology continues to shape societal conceptions of heroism, morality, and identity, and thus remains a significant aspect of contemporary life. In the modern age, these ancient stories are increasingly mediated through popular culture, with comic books standing out as a particularly rich site of classical reception. Among the most frequently adapted figures, Heracles – better known by his Roman name, Hercules – occupies a central role. His mythic legacy, characterized by strength, cunning, and fallibility, offers fertile ground for reinterpretation within the superhero genre. Although the presence of the classical hero in comics dates back several decades, the twenty-first century has seen a marked shift in the way these stories are adapted, often reflecting more complex and socially relevant dimensions of the character.



41. Cover of Marvel's
Hercules, issue 1, 4 Nov.
2015 / [source](#).

This study examines the reception of Heracles in Marvel Comics' *Hercules* (2016), a brief but thematically ambitious series which offers a reinterpretation of the hero for a modern audience. Unlike earlier portrayals that celebrated Hercules as a figure of brute strength and divine excess, this series presents a hero grappling with his own obsolescence, cultural relevance, and personal redemption. Set in a modern urban landscape, this Hercules is introspective and self-aware, seeking to rebuild his reputation and prove that mythic figures still have a place in the modern world. Rather than simply transplanting an ancient hero into a contemporary setting, the narrative critically engages with the classical tradition, selectively preserving, revising, and transforming mythological elements to reflect present-day concerns.

An analysis of the narrative structure, visual iconography, and character development of *Hercules* (2016) demonstrates how the series achieves a balance between fidelity to the mythological tradition and critical revision, ultimately portraying Hercules not merely as a legacy character but as a symbol of the ongoing dialogue between classical antiquity and the present.



42. Covers of Marvel's *Hercules*, issue 2–6, 9 Dec. 2015–13 April 2016 / [source](#).

MERCÉDESZ STOCKER is a PhD student in the Antique Literatures and Cultures subprogram within the Doctoral School of Literature at the University of Szeged. Her research interests focus on the representation of ancient mythology in popular culture, with a particular emphasis on classical reception within contemporary comic books.

LUCAS TAMARGO

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KRAKOA AND THE RETURN OF THE IDEAL CITY: CLASSICAL MODELS OF THE PERFECT COMMUNITY IN THE X-MEN'S KRAKOAN AGE



43. Krakoa as portrayed in *Wolverine* #6 (2020) by artist Viktor Bogdanovic / [source](#).

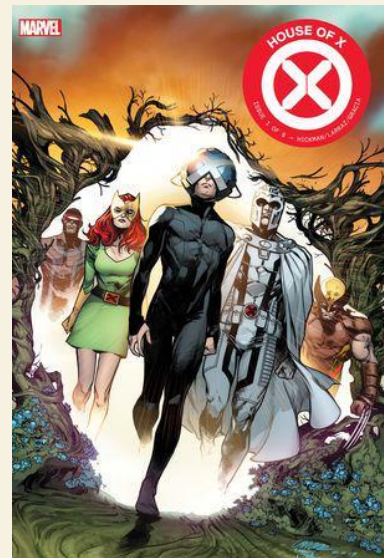
The Krakoan Age of the X-Men has often been read through lenses of biopolitics, nationalism, and resurrection theology. This presentation proposes a different approach: Krakoa as the contemporary reactivation of a much older intellectual and religious motif — the ideal city as a community set apart from a corrupted world.

From Plato's *Republic* to Stoic conceptions of the polis of the sage, and later to Augustine's *Civitas Dei*, classical and late antique thought repeatedly imagined the solution to historical injustice and moral decay not as reform within existing structures, but as the foundation of a radically new community governed by

different laws, values, and ontological assumptions. These ideal cities share key structural features: separation from the flawed world, strict criteria of belonging, a redefinition of identity, foundational laws, and the promise of a superior form of life for their members.

Krakoia reproduces this structure with striking precision. The Three Laws, the Quiet Council, the sacred status of the island, the redefinition of mutant identity, and, above all, the institution of resurrection as a civic privilege reserved for citizens, transform Krakoa into more than a political project: it becomes a moral-religious community that mirrors the logic of classical ideal cities. As in Plato, Augustine, and the Stoics, belonging to the city entails belonging to a different order of existence.

This essay argues that Krakoa should be read not simply as a fictional nation or political experiment, but as the latest iteration of the classical philosophical-religious tradition of the ideal city. By situating the Krakoan project within this *longue durée* of thought, the essay offers a new way to understand the theological and religious dimensions of the X-Men's most ambitious narrative experiment.



44. *House of X* #1 cover by Pepe Larraz / [source](#).

LUCAS TAMARGO is a pre-doctoral researcher in Ancient World Studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), and a graduate of the Interuniversity Master's Degree in History and Science of Antiquity — *Máster Interuniversitario en Historia y Ciencias de la Antigüedad* (MIHCA) — offered jointly by the UAM and the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM). He specializes in studies of classical reception in contemporary historiography and cultural production. He has published articles and given lectures on the reception of ancient Rome in film, literature, and press, and participated in the last AMPRAW with the presentation "Comparison with Rome and dialectic of states in the USA: against England, Italy and the USSR".

DAMIANOS TZOUPIS

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GREEK CIVIL SPHERE AND ANCIENT HERITAGE: THE COMPLICATED USES OF A SACRED PAST IN PROCESSES OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Contemporary Greece has been experiencing severe existential insecurity. The multiple and ongoing crises since 2009 (economic, political, social) have led to a prolonged decline in standards of living, severe structural problems, and ultimately a sense of constant negativity. In other words, Greece has been experiencing cultural trauma: severely disruptive events that change the group consciousness of a society (e.g., its memories, moral stance, social solidarity etc.). In this context, it is important to understand how the nation reflects on the foundational narratives that shape it to understand its present and future. I am specifically interested in the place idealized ancient heritage can take in these rearrangements of Greekness and in the kind of practices, values, and future possibilities current perceptions of classical heritage can make available.

Using the concept of the “civil sphere,” I explore discourses on ancient heritage by actors active in public practices of social criticism, social reflection, and political activity. This illuminates the role of idealized, consecrated antiquity in collective dialogue, collective deliberation, and social mobilization. I investigate discourses by non-institutional actors (e.g., individuals, collectivities) —who have not received the same attention as institutional ones— by drawing on data from online public consultation on laws regarding cultural topics and heritage, in the post-pandemic period. The investigation uncovers



45. A protest against the commercialization of culture and its significant negative impacts on the content of art / [source](#).



46. “Ancient Greece offered us the arts. Modern Greece is destroying them” banner from a demonstration from 2023. Phot. by Dimitris Kapantais/SOOC / [source](#).

the perception of heritage by the majority as a sacred common resource for the nation. Discourses of sacredness, respect, and resistance towards the commodification of heritage and towards its profanation by logics of profit and conspicuous consumption are dominant. These, however, coexist with less salient discourses around commodification for purposes of growth. By mapping such discourses, I hope to show the complicated roles that consecrated ancient heritage plays for the in-crisis Greek nation, while also revealing its potential to be a source of resistance and inspiration as the ‘uncommodifiable’ sacred.

DAMIANOS TZOUPIS’ undergraduate and postgraduate studies were in Greek language, literature, and the classics, while he pursued and completed his doctoral at the University of Edinburgh, doing work on the field Socio-Cultural Studies. For his doctorate, he studied how Greek university students of varied backgrounds read, experience, appropriate, and use ancient Greek texts in the contexts of their personal and social lives in contemporary, crisis-inflicted Greece. He has presented and published a series of papers on classics’ reception, cultural sociology, the sociology of reading, and cultural heritage and Greek nationalism. Finally, he has worked as academic tutor in the social sciences at the University of Edinburgh.

TEG WARD

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RUINING MINECRAFT; PROCEDURALLY GENERATED ANTIQUITY IN A GAME WITH 'NO' STORY

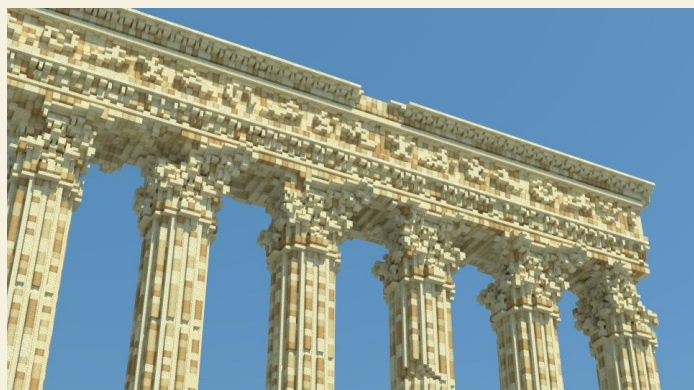
When discussing making imagined worlds, a prime example can be found in *Minecraft* (Mojang 2009), designed specifically to allow players to create whatever their imagination can come up with, and one that itself creates each world anew for its players to explore and inhabit. While the game does not present any baked-in, advertised narrative to its players, nor any explicit connection to Classics, both are undeniably present. Ruins litter the worlds of *Minecraft*, an aesthetic shorthand for a supposedly ancient history.



47. Minecraft logo / [source](#).

The mechanics of *Minecraft* are such that no two ruins are the same, each procedurally generated from a set of detailed, pre-defined parameters. Ian Bogost's idea of procedural rhetoric (Bogost 2007) can consequently be considered on multiple levels, revealing both emergent and embedded narratives (Cardoso & Carvalhais 2013, Chapman 2016, Livingstone et al 2016) of the game. Extensive developer and community documentation of structures such as the Ancient Cities allows us to easily understand these procedural parameters, letting us see both the bigger picture and the snapshot at the same time. Developer notes as well hint at an idea of an ancient history, yet it is one many players may never even consider. Ruinology (Parry 2019), archaeology, and game design can be seen working hand in hand to create structures like the Ancient City, an undeniable remnant of antiquity within the game's world. Analysing such a unique set of circumstances by considering both the parameters and outcomes allows us to understand how the idea of ruination (Stoler 2013) can be translated to a digital medium, and how such ideas can be used in narrative, interactive gameplay, and in making imaginary worlds.

TEG WARD is a current Masters' candidate in Classical Studies at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. Their particular area of interest lies in archeo- and historical gaming, investigating the many ways in which the ancient world and video games interact. Introduced to the concept as an undergraduate, Teg went on to complete their Honours with a thesis examining the narrative use of ruins across different video games, and is currently looking into how fictional antiquities are constructed and communicated in video games.



48. A reconstruction of the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek, Lebanon, by VickyThiccy Minecraft's player / [source](#).

This presentation is a combination of their past and present research into the game of *Minecraft*.

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ALGORITHMIC CLEOPATRA: AI, SHORT-FORM VIDEO AND THE DIGITAL REPRODUCTION OF ANTIQUITY

Today, in the third decade of the 21st century, digital technology along with AI, have recreated the ways in which figures of antiquity are visualised, understood and remembered. A great example is Cleopatra VII, the last queen of Ptolemaic Egypt. For centuries, her image was shaped by writers, poets and painters working within the constraints of their medium and historical period; today, it is continuously recreated and regenerated by artificial intelligence and algorithmically governed platforms.



49. Bust of Cleopatra Philopator on the obverse of a silver tetradrachm from 50–49 BC, © Trustees of the British Museum / [source](#).

This paper argues that what we are witnessing is no longer reception in the traditional sense, but a process of constant digital re-production. AI tools and social media platforms do not merely transmit or interpret the past – they actively generate new, potentially infinite versions of it. The more a figure is requested, the more the algorithm reproduces them. Cleopatra, as one of the most searched figures of antiquity, becomes both the product and the

engine of this logic.

My paper analyses AI-generated images of Cleopatra together with her circulation on Instagram and TikTok, including aesthetic reconstructions, short-form videos (reels and Tik-Toks) and viral edits. It identifies how platform constraints (brevity, visual intensity, the imperative of engagement) systematically favor a particular Cleopatra: sexualized, dramatic, visually captivating, stripped of political and historical complexity or prominence. Through the case studies presented, the article studies how digital tools are transforming public understanding of the ancient world and ultimately proposes that the algorithm itself should be seen not just as a neutral channel of transmission, but as a reception agent that imagines and curates antiquity according to its own structural imperatives.



50. AI generated Cleopatra by Chris0223, Pixabay / [source](#).

JULIA WOLLNER is an Italianist, journalist, educator, and cultural studies scholar specializing in Mediterranean culture and the reception of classical antiquity. She received her PhD from the University of Warsaw in 2010 with a dissertation on the myth of Cleopatra in Italian literature, cinema, visual arts, and music. She collaborates with the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” at the University of Warsaw and lectures on Mediterranean culture at the Mazovian University of the Third Age. She is involved in projects promoting Greek and Roman mythology among young audiences and is the author of a children’s book on classical mythology. She also founded *Lente*, a magazine and podcast dedicated to Mediterranean culture.