

**eisodos**  
Zeitschrift für  
Antike Literatur  
und Theorie



74.

*Minotaurum Theseus vincit .*

# e i s o d o s

Zeitschrift für  
Antike Literatur und Theorie

2022 (1) Frühling

# e i s o d o s – Zeitschrift für Antike Literatur und Theorie

Herausgegeben von Bettina Bohle

Erscheinungsort: Gießen

ISSN: 2364-4397

eisodos erscheint unter dem Copyright CC BY.

[www.eisodos.org](http://www.eisodos.org)

## Wissenschaftlicher Beirat

Manuel Baumbach

*Ruhr-Universität Bochum*

Stefan Büttner

*Universität Wien*

Jonas Grethlein

*Universität Heidelberg*

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht

*Stanford University*

Constanze Güthenke

*Oxford University*

Johanna-Charlotte Horst

*Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München*

Rebecca Lämmle

*University of Cambridge*

Peter von Möllendorff

*Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen*

Glenn Most

*Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa / University of Chicago*

Gernot Michael Müller

*Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt*

Heinz-Günther Nesselrath

*Universität Göttingen*

Maria Oikonomou

*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

Gerhard Poppenberg

*Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg*

Christiane Reitz

*Universität Rostock*

Christoph Riedweg

*Universität Zürich*

Arbogast Schmitt

*Philipps-Universität Marburg*

Thomas A. Schmitz

*Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn*

Monika Schmitz-Emans

*Ruhr-Universität Bochum*

Linda Simonis

*Ruhr-Universität Bochum*

Jörn Steigerwald

*Universität Paderborn*

Martin Vöhler

*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

Michael Weißenberger

*Universität Rostock*

Zandro Zanetti

*Universität Zürich*

**eisodos** ist eine peer-reviewed, open-access Online-Zeitschrift und richtet sich an alle Literaturwissenschaftler\*innen im B. A.-, M. A.- und Lehramtsstudium sowie Doktorand\*innen. Thema von **eisodos** sind Fragen der Interpretation von antiker Literatur, insbesondere der griechisch-römischen Antike, und ihres Fortlebens sowie Literaturtheorien und deren Vergleich.

Eine Übersicht der in **eisodos** verwendeten Abkürzungen griechischer und lateinischer Autor\*innennamen und Werktitel findet sich unter folgendem Link: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste\\_der\\_Abkürzungen\\_antiker\\_Autoren\\_und\\_Werktitel](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_Abkürzungen_antiker_Autoren_und_Werktitel)

Das **eisodos**-Titelbild zeigt die Tötung des Minotaurus durch Theseus in einer Darstellung von Antonio Tempesta mit dem Titel "Theseus and the Minotaur (Minotaurum Theseus vincit), from The Metamorphoses of Ovid (Metamorphosean Sive Transformationum), plate 74" (entstanden nach 1606). Die Radierung befindet sich im Metropolitan Museum in New York.

## Inhaltsverzeichnis

Vorwort der Herausgeberin . . . . .	1
<i>Go Down The Rabbit Hole</i>	
An interview with Bethany Hucks and Mathura Umachandran . . . . .	3
<i>The Hunger Games</i>	
Anna Maeve Ellis . . . . .	12
Buchrezension	
Angela Conzo . . . . .	22

---

# VORWORT DER HERAUSGEBERIN

Liebe **eisodos**-Leser\*innen,

wir hoffen, Sie und ihr seid gut durch das letzte Jahr gekommen und haltet trotz fortwährender Auswirkungen der Corona-Pandemie gut durch.

Auch an **eisodos** selbst ist die Pandemie nicht spurlos vorübergegangen, so dass letztes Jahr keine Ausgabe der Zeitschrift erscheinen konnte. Die Zwischenzeit haben wir zum Nachdenken über den Stand und die Ausrichtung der Zeitschrift genutzt. Es haben sich einige Veränderungen ergeben. Zunächst, was die Redaktion betrifft: Lena Krauss und Helen Neutzler haben auf eigenen Wunsch ihre Tätigkeit als Herausgeberinnen von **eisodos** beendet – ihnen gilt großer Dank für ihr Engagement für die Zeitschrift; Bettina Bohle führt die Redaktion mit Hilfe des neu als Redaktionsassistentin hinzugekommenen Benny Kozian bis auf Weiteres allein weiter; eine Übergabe der Herausgeberschaft an ein jüngeres Redaktionsteam, das – wie es ja auch bei der Gründung war – stärker aus unmittelbarer Erfahrung die Nachwuchswissenschaftler\*innen-Perspektive einbringen kann, ist in Planung.

Außerdem soll **eisodos** ein schärferes Profil erhalten, indem der Fokus der Zeitschrift fortan wieder auf Fragen der Interpretation von antiker Literatur und antiken Literaturtheorien liegen wird, insbesondere der griechisch-römischen Antike und ihrem Fortleben. So fruchtbar die Beiträge aus anderen Philologien und Literaturwissenschaften inhaltlich auch waren, so hat sich diese breite Ausrichtung als redaktionell schwer umsetzbar erwiesen.

Weiterhin hat das gestiegene Bewusstsein für gesellschaftspolitische Themen auch die Auseinandersetzung in und mit den Altertumswissenschaften und sog. klassischen Philologien nicht unberührt gelassen, was aus unserer Sicht eine wichtige und richtige Entwicklung ist. Solche Diskurse sollen in **eisodos** künftig verstärkt einen Raum finden, v.a. in den Interviews, wofür das in dieser Ausgabe veröffentlichte Gespräch mit Mathura Umachandran und Bethany Hucks zum Thema *Critical Classics* und dem Engagement der beiden auf diesem Gebiet ein gutes Beispiel ist.

Daneben erscheint in dieser Ausgabe ein Beitrag von Anna Maeve Ellis, in dem sie die Parallelen des Theseus-Mythos zur beliebten *Hunger Games*-Romantrilogie untersucht und sich über das Fortleben der Antike in heutigen Zeiten Gedanken macht.

Den Abschluss dieser Ausgabe bildet eine Rezension von Angela Conzo, die sich Martin Vöhlers Buch zu Pindarrezeptionen widmet.

Zuletzt sei noch darauf hingewiesen, dass wir mit Erscheinen dieser Ausgabe die neue Website von **eisodos** online stellen, die neben ihrem übersichtlicheren Layout auch eine Einreich-Funktion bietet, die die Redaktionsprozesse erleichtert und über die sich Autor\*innen jederzeit über den aktuellen Stand des Begutachtungsprozesses informieren können.

In diesen nicht nur wegen Corona und Klimakrise schwierigen und herausfordernden Zeiten wünschen alles Gute

Die Herausgeberin  
Bettina Bohle  
und Redaktionsassistent  
Benny Kozian

---

# *Go Down The Rabbit Hole*

## *Critical Classics*

An interview with Bethany Hucks and Mathura Umachandran

*Bethany Hucks is working on her Ph. D. (on the topic of Roman uses of Egyptian iconography in the Imperial Period) at the departments of Egyptology & Archaeology at Heidelberg University at the Cluster of Excellence Asia & Europe*

*Dr. Mathura Umachandran is currently a Postdoctoral Associate with the Society for the Humanites at Cornell University working, among other things, on her first book entitled *Critical Mythologies: Classical Reception and the Frankfurt School*.*

**eisodos** Thank you, Bethany Hucks and Mathura Umachandran, for speaking with *eisodos* about a movement one could call Critical Classics, your project *Sportula Europe* and about related issues. Could you start by introducing yourselves, explain a bit how you got into Classics, and what your research focuses on?

**Bethany Hucks** I am a mixed black American woman: my mother is white, my father is black and the descendants of enslaved Peoples in the Americas. I got into studying the Egyptian influence in Imperial Rome partly as a function of being a displaced person who felt sort of third cultural, thinking about what sort of lasting impact cultures do have when they travel. I have lived extensively on both coasts in the United States, and I have spent time in educational institutions in Italy and Germany. I have done excavations in the UK, Croatia, and Greece.

I come from a lower class family. I do not have a safety net, so everything I do is off brand applications or earning money online. I'm always worried about the next step and about visas and things like that. I have always had a weird position of not fully feeling like I belong to any one culture or space, which is something that heavily informs my research. But I also feel like I'm freer to come up with ideas that are maybe outside of Classics. I studied biochemistry. I worked in financial marketing for years in New York and I did my Masters degree in Museum Studies in Italy. I have all these different perspectives I feel that I'm able to integrate into my research.

So I would say my own personal background is really influential in my work. That's one of the things that I really like about Classics: that each person has such a wildly different



perspective. But it is also one of the limitations that it has been so heavily influential in sort of white Western spaces. There aren't a lot of Latin courses for people like me — I taught myself once I'd already started my Ph. D. There are quite a lot of spaces in which people go straight through school, all the way, without having any sort of outside of university institution experience. I think people could really benefit from taking a pause and coming back to Classics. Obviously, funding is its own issue: but having funded opportunities for people from different backgrounds to bring these different perspectives to Classics would be another way to go.

**Mathura Umachandran** It seems like the way that we fund people is linked to the kind of experiences that we are inviting in. We need to really rethink how academia can be hospitable to people with different life experiences and people who aren't just following this linear trajectory from school through university through Ph. D. to professorship. That's still very much the default model in Classics in particular. And I say that as someone who has followed that trajectory.

I'm Tamil, I'm from London. I have done a Ph. D. in the U. S., and I did my undergraduate at Oxford. I have also got a strange split between my postdoctoral positions being on both sides of the Atlantic, I'm a kind of ambidexterous creature in that sense. I have written a bit about my development and investments in Classics in a piece called "On White Fragility of White Classicists".<sup>1</sup> It came out in 2017 and really marked a turning point for me in assessing what my place in Classics was, understanding it as a racialized place and a gendered place simultaneously. I have a permanent job for next academic year at the University of Exeter which I'm really excited about.

I'm really hyper-aware of being tokenized of being the presentable brown person, of how majority white departments can maintain their anti-blackness through my brown presence. I have been lucky enough to have two very prestigious appointments at Oxford and up here at Cornell. It is only because I come from a middle class family that I have been able to survive through periods of unemployment in the academic world, six months here, nine months there. So I'm really attentive that in all the ways that I'm marginalized in terms of my identity, in terms of material support I'm in a better position to take advantage of the way that the system is set up. So that's my trajectory.

In terms of my research I feel very particular about the way that we use critique and the word 'critical'. The book I'm working on is called *Critical Mythologies*. I'm interested in critique in the sense of the Frankfurt school thinking about how we think about culture and what do we do when we are not taking as accepted the kind of cornerstones of Western cultural coordinates.

---

<sup>1</sup> URL: <https://eidolon.pub/fragile-handle-with-care-66848145cf29>, last accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

**eisodos** Could you maybe describe what's your critique or, so to speak: What's your beef with Classics as a discipline? With regard to what you're describing and what I have been reading about the Critical Classics Movement I feel like the leap is very huge for many people in what could call mainstream Classics. I think where most people are at now – at least in Germany, according to my observation – is gender as a critical issue.

**Mathura Umachandran** I think there is a movement in the sense that there are a lot of people talking about this thing — Critical Classics. I think back to Johanna Hanink's *eidolon* piece.<sup>2</sup> That kind of set the flag for critical classical reception. But what we all mean by critique is very different. Some of us are coming to critique from an abolitionist stance. Some of us are using critique as a way of saying let's just make Classics a little bit more accessible.

**Bethany Hucks** What does Classics actually mean to people versus to scholarship? This word, Classics, and both in German and in English — its meaning depends on the class of the person that you ask and the history of their family and their relationship to education. In some way, it implies that things that are not studied by Classics are not worthy of the title. We generally limit what Classics is to be the history of Rome and parts of Greek history, not even all of Greek history. German education systems in particular are very segmented in the way that they teach these things. Often the departments do not communicate with each other, so your Department of Near Eastern Archeology won't communicate with your Classical Archeology or your Classics Department. And that's not even getting into the other Ancient Mediterranean and West Asian cultures. There's also an insistence in German in continuing to use the word 'oriental', instead of switching over to a less problematic term like West Asia, decentering the Western perspective on how we refer to geographical spaces. In the ancient world, people are sailing all around the Mediterranean. They are constantly in contact with each other over land as far away as the U. K. and Germany and West Africa, Sudan and India, and even as far as China in some circumstances. When we say Classics, we sort of draw these artificial boundaries between ancient contact and ancient people, and we behave as though these people are fixed in a certain time and place.

On top of this, you are not necessarily thinking about different classes, different genders, different spaces — who lives in the suburbs, who lives on the peripheries, and how are they communicating with each other? What level of sort of cultural competence did people have? Obviously, people know their grains are coming from other places, but how much did they know about the people and the places that grain came from? You are hearing from merchants. Those merchants are passing tales on to vendors. Those vendors talk to their customers. Those customers talk to their families. There is all this level of

---

<sup>2</sup> URL: <https://medium.com/eidolon/its-time-to-embrace-critical-classical-reception-d3491a40eec3d>, last accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

cultural contact. The point is to say: all of these other people also took part in this conversation, and we should listen to their other perspectives and take them into account when studying these places and spaces.

When we say something limiting about the space and the time that we are studying, we kind of freeze it in a way that is not realistic. It is a very different situation on the ground. I think that the way that we think about Classics is problematic from the get go even before you add things like modern colonialism.

**Mathura Umachandran** I have different investments in German academic institutions. Part of my work is thinking about the history of Classics as it developed in England, in Germany and in the US. For the last four semesters, I taught a class called “What is Classics – Towards A Critical Disciplinary History”. It was about how this discipline grew up hand in hand with racial thinking in many iterations. One of the key texts that I taught in that class was Sylvia Winter’s phenomenal essay about the overrepresentation of man. And in that sense of overrepresentation, she means a very particular idea of white Western subjecthood. The subject of History and Classics would be transformed to the point of being unrecognizable if we unhooked our knowledge-making from this kind of overrepresentation if we decided to study the past without having a silent commitment to reproducing the West and continuing to overrepresent a particular subject. So that’s my beef with Classics.

**Bethany Hucks** You can see this come together in the more modern period when you see human zoos. There are a lot of people in Europe who do not know things about the history of Blackface in Europe, the history of these sort of degrading human spectacles that drew hundreds of thousands of people across the continent and were reflected in art and writing of the time period. I think quite a lot of people here are not aware of that history. They do not necessarily think that they need to draw a line from phrenology to Classics, for example, when those things cannot be separated. The history of the foundation of museums and collecting cannot be separated from the history of anthropology and racism. This is one of the things when we talk about decolonizing as far as possible: the way that European collections are structured is so heavily influenced by this history.

And of course, you get into this with the discussions about the repatriation of Benin bronzes, people saying: but we want to display stuff, too. We do not want to have empty museums. Giving back the Benin bronzes is not going to empty the Humboldt Museum. That is just an absurd claim. A lot of people are asking: well, how far do we take it? And the answer is: as far as the people who are still being affected by colonialism feel it is necessary to take it. If certain cultures choose to treat things different ways, then that’s on them. But it shouldn’t be on the people who murdered people to obtain objects and their descendants to make those claims. Why couldn’t people just go to Benin instead of going to Germany? The Benin Museum is a fantastic place, they built this incredible space to

hold the collection. What is that mental block that says that Europe is more important to travel to or safer to travel to? There are all these other constructions, social constructions. People need to do the work, to really think through their assumptions about these things when having this conversation. In German newspapers there's less nuance than I would like to see and certainly far less quotations from the voices of the descendants of Benin than there are from the curators at the Humboldt Museum or citizens of Berlin. I think there needs to be a lot of work done there on the coverage of this stuff in order to sway public opinion or to be less biased in a particular direction.

I do not think that's too difficult to ask, but it is going to take a while for people to get over that initial — as Mathura was saying — sort of fragility. Part of that is because the public conversation in Germany is lagging behind places like London, which is more multicultury. Look at the Anthropology and Ethnology Museum in Cologne, for example. It has a top floor room which is about teaching people in little ways those very basic steps in how to think about their position in society and that it doesn't have to be all good or all bad. There are layers to identity. All of those layers come together to create the way that people will see you, and those are always in flux. Until that becomes sort of more dominant conversation in Germany, I think it is still going to be painful for people to have these conversations, let alone for people like me who try to have these conversations and then are continually getting shut down. As the only person of color in most of the departments I'm in that can be really disheartening and make me not want to continue talking to people about it.

By virtue of the fact that we have this conversation, Mathura and I are labeled as activists in the field, whereas everybody else who's not doing this work I would label as passivist, they do not have to take steps, or they are unwilling to take steps, or there are other people of color who are just exhausted about having this conversation or do not want to be known for only this thing. We get labeled as pushy or aggressive because we want to change the space for what we consider better and more reflective of an actual history, of an accurate representation of the world, both then and now.

**Mathura Umachandran** Pendant to what Beth was saying I want to add: There are also material costs to speaking out, it affects our bodies, our mental health. It takes up time.

Coming back to a point you made in your question: When we say that Germany is lagging behind in its kind of public intellectual conversations, I think it is actually a bit of a misrepresentation of who is taking up the space, who is making the loudest noises, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, which voices are articulating important critiques but are not being heard. There are long-standing immigrant communities all over Germany as well as an Afro Deutsche diaspora community. It is just that they have not been represented, they do not make it to prestigious university positions, they do not

make it to important media jobs. It is about who we choose to listen to. If it is always going to be first our white women, then our women of color, and then maybe our black women, we'll always just get stuck in the white women because that's part of the function of white supremacy. I think we can choose who we listen to as opposed to who, by some passive construction of the political and social landscape, is just being centered.

**eisodos** So apart from listening what can I, what can people do who want to avoid stereotypical and discriminatory approaches and decolonize the existing material in their research and teaching?

**Mathura Umachandran** Looking at the public education system, it is very telling what the state wants you to know and to not know. If the German Empire is not taught about it is unsurprising that it therefore produces a public that does not have the tools to look critically at a museum. People have never had to look around their built environment and see: oh, that stone came from thousands of miles away. Why is that stone here? Or why does the iconography on my school building look like this? Why does my world look like this?

**Bethany Hucks** There are people who do these sort of tours in most major cities, there are people of color who run individual tours that you can ask to specialize in a museum tour or a guided walk just as a basic entry to look at our visible presence, starting to integrate thinking about other kinds of influences on modern and ancient built spaces and how learning to see can change your perspective. I think it is important to know what you do not know and to try to figure out how to listen to those voices. Listening more than talking when we move into spaces where — even though we are less privileged in some spaces — we are more privileged than others. Learning, doing the reading, doing the work, keeping your mouth shut, and proving yourself trustworthy.

There are all these things that happen when we are talking about Archeology and Classics and the history of the discipline. Add onto that history of museum collecting and how museum collections were separated out by ideas of racial hierarchies.

What you can do is work on your knowledge of the field itself. This can be done in pretty much any field. Look up articles about colonial reception or colonial history and your field. Look up responses by groups from those regions or from those backgrounds. That may mean doing a little bit more work in English or French. For instance, in Egyptology, if you take a course in Germany on the history of Egyptology, what you get is a lot of pride in German people going to Egypt and doing things that the Egyptians weren't interested in. And you get a lot of 'this was the first woman to do it', without thinking about how women are also perpetuating colonial stereotypes and structures. I think it is really important to do reading about the places and cultures of the modern time period when this collecting is happening, to learn more about the power structures

and the legislation that was happening in those places and those time periods and about the politics. Then go back and read the history of your field.

There are some online readings and coursework that you can do within the length of essentially a semester, a couple of weeks to give you a solid foundation. There's some good syllabi out there where you can just read the articles, get a good overview of the history of that sort of thing, and then readdress the readings you have done beforehand and try to take note of how you thought about this the first time or whether you thought about this the first time and where those points of interests are, and then just go down the rabbit hole on the things that interest you.

**eisodos** I like that as a kind of way to get going. You do not ask someone to go somewhere else, but you ask them to basically look around and just kind of start to stumble a little bit. What else is there you can do?

**Mathura Umachandran** I have so many friends who have asked me variations on the question, like: 'All of the *Intro To The Ancient World* books that I have are just super racist and super invested in coloniality. What do we do?'

I run a project called *Critical Ancient World Studies* (CAWS). That project is trying to make a new discipline from an epistemology that is not tied to the West and trying to set itself apart from Classics. This project is asking questions like: What could we do differently if we still want to think with these slices of the ancient past, with this particular set of myths? How could we do it in a way that is less violent, and how can we do it in a way that is more open to liberation? So that's what I mean by critique here.

CAWS has one book under contract at the moment, entitled *The Case for Critical Ancient World Studies: Forgetting Classics*, our manuscript is due at the end of the summer. It is a research book, but it is also aimed to be accessible to undergraduates.

In our editors' introduction we set out the case that memory, disciplinary and institutional, has been central to how Classics has become the way it has, the way that it is so invested in whiteness, in the West as master subjects, what kinds of forgetting and erasures have been necessary, and then making a turn to thinking about what else we could do. Memory is not a default process, it is not a passive one, it is one that is active and intimately bound up with ideologies of race and westernness. But we can do other things, that is the great point about it.

The second book I am working on related to what we have been talking about has a high school age audience in mind. We are collaborating on the writing, it is quite an interesting process. It involves a group of scholars who are mostly graduate students and early career folks. The book is a walkthrough of a speculative museum. You can imagine yourself walking into and confronting the colonial history of collecting and then what a museum would look like otherwise.

**eisodos** Lastly, I want to ask you about the initiative which you started during corona, *Sportula Europe*.

**Mathura Umachandran** *Sportula Europe* is a mutual aid group that we set up in May 2020. It is the sister organization to the *Sportula*, which had been running for a few years very effectively in the U. S.; it has been run as a grassroots activist organization and suffered the consequences of being a grassroots activist organization run by two women of color in a field that is particularly hostile to poor people, queer folks, black people and people of color. A month and a half into the pandemic, it was just very clear that the university structures were so badly equipped to meet the immediate needs for money that precarious people — students and early career people — were encountering. Lots of people lost their sources of income, single or multiple. Lots of people suddenly found themselves evicted from their university halls of residence. Lots of people had to scramble to get a flight home before that border got shut. There were all of these sudden needs for money very quickly, short term. What was there was just insufficient. So we took our cue from the *Sportula*, but also the mutual aid groups that were springing up around us.

We set up a *no questions asked*-policy and gave £100 or the equivalent in euro for anyone who wanted to write an application. We tried to meet every request that we got. The only thing we asked in return if people were comfortable doing it, was giving us a small testimony that we could put on social media. It is really striking that we were all people of color, people who had had – even if we have passed through very elite institutions – nontraditional academic journeys. At some time or another all of us have encountered that situation of ‘I do not know how to have money, I do not know how to make rent this month or I know that money exists, but I’m too scared to ask for it.’ The pandemic was forcing us into saying we are going to demystify this process. People’s lives depend on it. So that’s *Sportula Europe* and it is a whole ton of work, volunteer work, many hours on Zoom organizing.

Now it feels like the acute crisis of the pandemic has passed and we are into this much longer drawn out crisis. It is unclear how the work of *Sportula Europe* needs to continue. It is going to continue in some form. But all of us are burned out. We’ve been running this mutual aid organization for nearly two and a half years.

**eisodos** In addition to all your other duties, right?

**Mathura Umachandran** Yes. In addition to periods of unemployment and moving across continents and moving institutions and trying to get visas. Every one of us has had a mental health crisis. It has just been an incredibly difficult period of time.

**Bethany Hucks** All that to say: we are recruiting. We are looking to spread the work out a little more as some of us move into more permanent jobs. We think it is important that people who know what it is like to need that sort of support come and help provide

some of that support to other people. We'd like to make the organization itself more sustainable long term instead of relying on just the five of us. If you are able to putting out that we are interested in people coming to support us at whatever level they are able, we would be grateful.

**eisodos** I will definitely spread the word. Thank you for the interview!

The interview was conducted by Bettina Bohle. It has been edited for length and clarity. More information about *Sportula Europe* including the contact details can be found on their website: <https://sportulaeurope.wordpress.com>



---

# *The Hunger Games*

## *Theseus and our Relationship to Antiquity*

Anna Maeve Ellis

*Universitetet i Oslo*

### **Introduction**

Suzanne Collins has never been coy about the roots of *The Hunger Games* in Antiquity, citing the Theseus *Sagenkreis*,<sup>1</sup> the Roman gladiator sport, the works of Mary Renault, and her father reading aloud to her from Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* as inspiration.<sup>2</sup> Suzanne Collins drew heavily upon Antiquity, and in particular on the Theseus *Sagenkreis* whilst writing the 2008 novel *The Hunger Games*. Perhaps the first clue lies in that Collins named her dystopian world Panem. This choice signals that she is not only interested in Greek myth, but also in Roman history, as she would of course be familiar with the Latin motto *panem et circenses* (Lat.: "bread and games") which was operationalised to govern and mollify Roman subjects. *The Hunger Games* takes place in the country of Panem, which is a federal system with 12 (formerly 13) districts under the rule of a Capitol. They are mostly controlled through the promise of intimidation and the possibility of reward. These city-states must send two teenage tributes every year, one male and one female, to play in the Hunger Games, a televised sport in which the players fight to the death until only one remains. The tributes are chosen by lottery. Adding their names multiple times to the lottery entitles them to more food rations, grain and oil for breadmaking. Here we see another reference to Antiquity as Collins named these rations *tesserae*, after the minute mosaic tiles. This is a subtle but poignant metaphor, indicating that they are risking their lives for meagre portions represented by these tiles. One of her characters in subsequent books *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* is named Plutarch Heavensbee. This is a jocular reference, as Heavensbee is literally living parallel lives as a double agent for the resistance. The primary focus of this paper, however, lies in how Suzanne Collins engages Theseus' inspirational qualities as well as modern society's decreasing familiarity with Antiquity to her advantage to write a successful dystopian retelling of the Theseus *Sagenkreis*.

---

<sup>1</sup> The author has chosen to use the German word *Sagenkreis* to describe the legend cycle describing a person, event or place, to describe the collection of myths which pertain to Theseus.

<sup>2</sup> Levithan (2018).

### The Theseus Sagenkreis

Celebrations of Theseus and his adventures have been found on Attic vases dating from the latter half of the 6th century BCE.<sup>3</sup> Although he is not seen in the *Iliad*, he is referenced on numerous occasions, including by Nestor and by Odysseus. One early surviving written work with a direct representation of Theseus establishes his role as a major character in *Oedipus at Colonus*, written by Sophocles in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. The stories of Theseus have been retold countless times until they have formed a more or less cohesive canon, as has been the case with virtually every other popular hero of legend. The most extensive source concerning the Theseus *Sagenkreis* is Plutarch's *The Parallel Lives*. In a separate chapter dedicated to Theseus, Plutarch examines and weighs the plausibilities of different versions of the legend.

### The Theseus Sagenkreis as pertains to *The Hunger Games*

Theseus was born to Aethra, daughter of Pittheus, King of Troezen. His father's identity is initially unknown to him. Many sources claim that Theseus was believed to be the son of Poseidon himself. This is a typical quality in a classical hero, with other examples such as Achilles and Aeneas who had one mortal and one divine parent each. Given the concept of telegony,<sup>4</sup> it is not unlikely that Greeks could believe he had two fathers, one mortal and one divine.

Theseus begins his journey when his mother Aethra reveals his father's identity as King Aegeus of Athens, and he claims his father's sword and sandals. When Theseus sets off to meet his father, he refuses to take the safe sea route from Troezen to Athens, instead taking the dangerous land route, leading to his Six Labours, where he must eliminate the malevolent bandits who scourge the land.<sup>5</sup> Next, Theseus meets his father Aegeus in Athens, and is almost poisoned by his jealous lover Medea before Aegeus recognises the tokens of his paternity and welcomes Theseus as his son.<sup>6</sup>

Every year, the Cretans under King Minos collect a tribute of fourteen, seven each of young men and women. They are a sacrifice to the Minotaur, a horrific beast, half man and half bull. These tributes are chosen by a public lottery. There are many differing accounts of what exactly the sacrifice was for, and disagreement on whether or not there was actually a monster, especially since there was a popular trend to demystify Theseus as a hero and doer of implausible deeds, instead establishing him as a plausible, historical figure and thereby anchoring him in history as the unifier of Athens and its surrounding territory.<sup>7</sup> In one version of events Theseus insists that his name be put in the lottery in solidarity with his people, and in another Theseus directly volunteers as a tribute to

---

<sup>3</sup> Oakley (2013) 70–72.

<sup>4</sup> Griffiths (2019): “[I]t alleged that the heredity of an individual is influenced not only by his father but also by males with whom the female may have mated and who have caused previous pregnancies.”

<sup>5</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 21–23.

<sup>6</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 25.

<sup>7</sup> Graf (1996) 138.

the Cretans, intending to put an end to this practice.<sup>8</sup> In *The King Must Die* by Mary Renault, a modern novelisation of the Theseus *Sagenkreis*, Theseus volunteers in the place of another tribute.

With the help of his lover Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, Theseus navigates the labyrinth surrounding the Minotaur with a roll of string and slays the monster. Alternatively, Theseus competes in the funeral games of King Minos' son Androgeos to win his people's freedom. He then escapes with the other tributes and the princess Ariadne, who he must then leave behind on the island of Dia when Dionysus demands her as his wife. He was meant to raise white sails to signal to his father that he was returning alive, however, he fails to do so. In his despair, King Aegeus takes his own life by throwing himself into the sea, which is known thereafter as the Aegean sea in his honour. This action is a midpoint in the Theseus legend, ending Theseus' tale as a heroic youth and casting him into his role as the new King of Athens. It is Theseus the youth with whom this paper is concerned, just as it is Theseus the youth who has most captured the attention of generations.

### ***The Hunger Games, Suzanne Collins***

The premise of *The Hunger Games* is highly similar to the legend of Theseus' youth. The similarities are inalienable, even though Katniss Everdeen, who is taking on the role of Theseus, is female, and the setting is a dystopian future instead of the glorious, ancient past. Katniss Everdeen inherits weapons from her father which contribute to her ultimate success: his bow and archery skills, her ability to survive in the woods, and her skill in climbing trees. Unlike Theseus, however, she is raised by a distant and neglectful mother after her father's death.

Like Theseus, Katniss Everdeen becomes a tribute to a politically motivated ritual sacrifice of an equal number of men and women. Reminiscent of Renault's interpretation of Theseus' sacrifice, Katniss volunteers as a tribute when the lot of her younger sister, Prim, is drawn. This creates an even more personal connection to the tribute who she chooses to sacrifice herself for. The male counterpart chosen to participate in the games with her is Peeta, a young man who has been unrequitedly in love with her since she was very young. They travel together to the Capitol, where the tributes are all fawned over before being sent to their deaths.

Much like Theseus' relationship with Ariadne, Katniss relies on using Peeta and his love for her to help her navigate the deadly Hunger Games. Instead of leaving him behind midway, she spurns him upon arriving back home after his cooperation ensures their survival. Unlike Theseus, she does not set out to change the system or to end the practice of the tributes, although throughout the sequels to the Hunger Games, she does become

---

<sup>8</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 34.

the symbolic leader of the rebellion and an icon of hope as the rule of the Capitol is finally abolished.

### Comparison and discussion

The decision to retell the Theseus legend with a female protagonist and male deuteragonist was popularly acceptable at the time of publishing. In transforming Theseus into the female protagonist Katniss Everdeen, Suzanne Collins subverts the expectations of the classical *hero's journey* or *monomyth*. This is a typically male process by which the protagonist begins his quest, defeats the enemy, and returns home a changed man. The fact that Katniss is female is not called into question in terms of her success, in the manner that male heroes' feats are not scrutinised on the basis of their sex. The tales of Theseus and Ariadne and Katniss and Peeta both highlight the importance of human interdependence. Theseus' traditionally male-coded qualities of courage, athleticism and cunning become Katniss' strengths, whereas Ariadne's loyalty, care and support become Peeta's prominent traits. This illustrates that these characteristics are no less esteemed than they were in classical times, and that they are similarly valued in either gender.

One significant deviation from the Theseus myth is that Katniss' parentage does not play a central role in her destiny. Theseus is born to rule, whereas Katniss seems to be born to suffer as a poor commoner in the lowliest district. Her parentage is not the subject of speculation, nor is she descended from a god. Her advantages in life are somewhat derived from her parents: her relationship with her father signaled her foray into woodsmanship before his tragic death while she was still a child, and her mother's absence taught her to be resilient and to fend for herself. Katniss Everdeen succeeds *in spite of*, instead of *due to*, her parents' status.

Much like the legends concerning Theseus were manipulated to create the aetiological basis for the unification of city states under Athenian leadership, Katniss Everdeen is manipulated into a symbolic role as the 'Mockingjay', uniting the 13 districts against their common enemy, the Capitol.

In his article *The Early Development of the Theseus Myth*, Henry J. Walker argues that Theseus was in fact always a hero to several other Ionian city-states, citing the Lapithians' and Thessalians' claim to Theseus in particular.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Fritz Graf dates Theseus' change from being a local hero to being a specifically Athenian hero in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>10</sup> Walker claims that it was advantageous to strengthen the Theseus legend and his unification of several kingdoms to justify Athenian expansion in the sixth century.<sup>11</sup> Graf argues that Theseus is beloved for his role in the political aetiology of Athens, as he is regarded as both the uniter and civiliser of various kingdoms.<sup>12</sup> This puts

---

<sup>9</sup> Walker (1995) 6.

<sup>10</sup> Graf (1996) 137.

<sup>11</sup> Walker (1995) 6.

<sup>12</sup> Graf (1996) 136–140.

him into stark contrast with another hero of the time, Herakles, who was often depicted as being reliant on brute strength. Similarly, Katniss is reliant upon her ability to evade danger, her intelligence and ranged weapon proficiency as opposed to pure physical feats.

Theseus and Katniss both serve to inspire and join people across populations. Resistance against both oppressors, the leadership of Crete and the Capitol regime, is considered distasteful at first. In *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch remarks that “verily it seems a grievous thing for a man to be at enmity with a city which has a language and literature” on the Athenians hesitancy to rebel against the system and get rid of the tributes to King Minos of Crete.<sup>13</sup> Suzanne Collins makes a point of exploring the difference between the primitive, backwards districts and the pristine, civilised Capitol. Those who live in the Capitol hide behind the concept of civilisation as they display their ostentatious wealth, while in the Districts people starve. Both Theseus and Katniss manage to overcome this hesitancy as they lead their people towards freedom.

The *Theseus Sagenkreis* does not have the same constraints in time and place as *The Hunger Games* has. Naturally, this is because the *Theseus Sagenkreis* was developed over generations and has a more extensive scope, covering Theseus’ entire lifespan. As a single-author book covering a previously unknown fictional character, *The Hunger Games* is limited in time. In writing an action-packed novel targeted towards young adults, Collins needed to have a fast tempo, a concrete story arc and a clear focus. It is reasonable to conclude Suzanne Collins chose thusly not to include a parallel for Theseus’ Six Labours on Katniss’ journey to the Capitol to take part in the Hunger Games. Nevertheless, there are elements which persist. Katniss must best one foe before even stepping foot in the Capitol. Her mentor Haymitch is at first an antagonist, an unpleasant drunkard and a previous victor of the Hunger Games. Haymitch can be seen as a subversive interpretation of Dionysus. She turns his own dour tactics against him, earning his respect and aid via intimidation and a display of grit. This is a nod to Theseus, as Theseus beats the majority of his foes on the road to Athens by hoisting them on their own petard.

Two other tributes, namely, Glimmer and Rue, can be considered as references to the characters Theseus meets along the road to Athens. Glimmer is a “Career” from District 1, a tribute who volunteered for glory. She is unsuccessful in her attempts to kill Katniss with a bow and arrow, which Katniss is known for her mastery of. She is slain by Katniss in her first kill in the arena, who triumphantly takes her weapon and uses it throughout the remainder of the *Hunger Games*. In a similar vein, when Theseus vanquished his first foe, Periphates, he took his weapon and thereafter “carried the club to show that although it had been vanquished by him, in his own hands it was invincible.”<sup>14</sup>

Katniss protects the vulnerable child Rue, just as Theseus protects the daughter of his foe Sinis the Pine-Bender. After slaying Sinis the Pine-Bender, Theseus finds his

---

<sup>13</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 33.

<sup>14</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 17.

daughter hiding in the woods. She was “with exceeding innocence and childish simplicity [...] supplicating these plants [...] vowing that if they would hide and save her, she would never trample them down nor burn them.”<sup>15</sup> Theseus then offers her his protection. Katniss forms an alliance with twelve-year-old Rue, whose survival is based on her ability to hide in and utilise the vegetation of the arena. Rue can be interpreted as the symbolic daughter of her enemy: the system at large. Rue is snared and killed like a hunter’s quarry by another tribute, and Katniss sings her to sleep before adorning her corpse in flowers. Finally, while it is not evident that Theseus feigns his love for Ariadne in order to win her crucial support, it is explicit that Katniss pretends to be in love with Peeta to manipulate him, as well as the viewers and those responsible for the Hunger Games. While she does this in order to save his life, it was originally a strategy to keep herself alive. While Theseus and Ariadne are wrenched apart by Dionysus on the isle of Naxos, Collins inverts expectations of the lovers’ union. It is Katniss’ drunkard mentor, Haymitch, who urges Katniss to maintain her ruse.

While Peeta knows that it was a strategy at first, he believes that she is truly in love with him by the end of *The Hunger Games*. On their train ride home from the Capitol, Peeta stops to pick Katniss a bouquet of onion flowers, while she reveals an indifferent attitude toward him. Typically, a woman’s romantic life is viewed with the utmost import and defining to her character, and any betrayal she perpetrates is much more severely reckoned with. Collins further subverts expectations of female heroines, as her romantic betrayal of Peeta does not negate her status as a hero. Although both Theseus and Katniss spurn their lovers, they still manage to remain heroes. This illustrates that across the millennia, heroes’ romantic behaviour has had little to no impact at all on perceptions regarding their heroic exploits.

### **Cultural and Educational Context**

Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The King Must Die* by Mary Renault are two other prominent interpretations of the Theseus legend throughout modern English literature. *Midsummer Night’s Dream* is a deconstruction of the Theseus legend bookended by appearances by Theseus himself. With this view in mind, the forest in which the four lovers (Hermia, Lysander, Helena, and Demetrius) find themselves lost becomes the labyrinth, Oberon becomes the king of the Cretans, almost playing with these youths for sport, and Peter Bottom the Weaver, the star of the theatre company, becomes a comedic stand-in for the minotaur. Bottom, as half man, half ass, is a farcical representation of the fearsome half man, half bull. The theme of being spurned by a lover is also turned on its head in this tale. If Helena and Hermia are both foils for Ariadne, so are Demetrius and Lysander both foils for Theseus in their own right. Unlike Dionysus, who is the catalyst for

---

<sup>15</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 17.

wrenching Ariadne and Theseus apart, Puck tries to ensure the lasting love and happiness between the lovers in his own bumbling manner.

While less culturally ubiquitous than the works of the Bard, or the best-selling *Hunger Games* series, *The King Must Die* is a critically acclaimed novel based on the Theseus myth, starting with his childhood and ending with his return from Crete and the death of his father Aegeus. The story is generally faithful to the original Attic and Theseus *Sagenkreise*. The unique quality of this work is that it retells beloved tales without magic, instead relying on psychology and natural science to explain phenomena which were previously attributed to the divine. For example, in *The King Must Die*, it is an earthquake, not divine or even mortal intervention, which separates the two lovers. Sarah Brown writes that the decoupling of classical forces from the pantheon leads to a “comedy of incongruity”, but it points towards a larger trend of separating the gods and the world of humans.<sup>16</sup> Although this combination of myth and modernity leads to a decontextualisation of the classics, on the other hand, it allows for innovation.

By 2008, Greek mythology played a less overt role in Western life and literary reference, particularly in the Western educational canon. In Paul Cartledge’s article *Why/How Does Classics Matter*, he argues that the Classics are on a woeful decline in Western public education while still permeating many aspects of everyday life. He points to the popularity of retellings of classical literature and history in both cinema and film as he argues why Classical studies matter.<sup>17</sup> Jane Mack explores the opponents of the traditional Western educational canon and their variety of criticisms in her work *The Role of the Western Educational Canon*.<sup>18</sup> Among these criticisms are the assertions that the canon is outdated, no longer innovative, ethnocentric, and predominantly male. It is most likely a combination of these which has led to decreased public funding for Classics. In *Classical Traditions in Modern Fantasy* Sarah Brown argues that there is a lower representation of Greek mythology in children’s literature as opposed to other folklore and religious myth. This can be connected to academic focus on Antiquity and in particular dead languages as “overfamiliar and wearisome”.<sup>19</sup> This can be extrapolated to literature at large. However, Brown does not believe this is a modern explanation, asserting that “in more recent years, because of a sharp decline in the study of classical languages, such an explanation would lose its force.”<sup>20</sup> Instead, she attributes the lack of interest in the Olympian pantheon to their clear authority and stories’ preoccupation with power.

Despite the issue of public education, Western culture is and is likely to be eternally infused with references to Antiquity. However, the public has lost the same degree of familiarity with classical myth and literature as previous generations had. This created

---

<sup>16</sup> Brown (2017) 194.

<sup>17</sup> Cartledge (2005) 188–192.

<sup>18</sup> Mack (1994).

<sup>19</sup> Brown (2017) 190.

<sup>20</sup> Brown (2017) 190.

the conditions for Suzanne Collins to be able to repackage the stories of Theseus as something new entirely, reformatting it for a modern audience by reimagining it in a dystopian setting. In *Classical Traditions in Modern Fantasy*, Brett M. Rogers discusses the relevance of *quest fantasy* to the development of modern fiction. He includes the following quote from W.A. Senior, that “the quest fantasy is characterised by its *protean* quality, its ability to subsume and reflect varied purposes and narratives through the medium of Story.”<sup>21</sup> Collins maintains the elements of Theseus’ character and story which make him popular and relatable, while switching his gender. She is able to do so without making explicit references to Theseus himself. *The Hunger Games* is strongly inspired by the Theseus *Sagenkreis*, and its popularity proves that the central ideas of the stories are still as relevant in popular culture today as they were even in pre-classical times.

### **Theseus and Katniss – why are they so inspirational?**

Theseus is one of the most relatable Greek heroes to both an ancient and a modern audience. To reiterate Graf’s argument, Theseus’ popularity could be attributed to the necessity of aetiological myth for the development of Athenian identity. In contrast to the famed Herakles, whose physical prowess became the cornerstone on which the cult of his heroism was built, Theseus is not exceptionally unusual in stature. He is instead a clever underdog who is able to solve his problems relying on his intelligence and charisma. These are two intangible qualities, and therefore the reader can more easily imagine themselves in his place. Katniss Everdeen is resourceful and pertinacious in her approach to survival, and while she is not particularly trained with weapons or unusually athletic, she can outsmart her enemies.

Furthermore, Theseus has stories which are similar to the stories of other beloved heroes, such as his Six Labours as compared to Herakles’ twelve, while having his own unique tale which unfolded in the story of the labyrinth. The twin tales of Theseus’ triumph in the labyrinth, and his treatment of Ariadne, both of which are explored in the texts discussed in this article, are still relatable and accessible in the modern age. Much in the same way, Katniss uses Peeta for her own success, navigating her way through the end of the Games and even convincing him to threaten mutual suicide with her, before spurning him after the danger has passed.

The idea of triumphing against an unjust system and bringing it to its knees, and the misery wrought by the “unkinde lover” are timeless and can be understood and universally appreciated by the public across human history.<sup>22</sup> Due to decreasing public familiarity with Antiquity and the Theseus *Sagenkreis* in particular, Suzanne Collins was able to reinvent the Theseus myths without explicitly mentioning their origin, updating them for the 21st century reader.

---

<sup>21</sup> Rogers (2017) 13.

<sup>22</sup> Lamb (1979) 478.



*There emerge still more forms changed into new fantasies, similarly animated by ancient notions of the impossible.*<sup>23</sup> – Brett M. Rogers

annamell@uio.no

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Anna Maeve Ellis is a second year bachelor student of History at Universitetet i Oslo, Norway. Before relocating to Oslo, Ellis earned her B. A. in International Relations, Foreign Policy and Security Studies focussing on the Eastern Mediterranean at the Pardee School, Boston University. She has previously been published in the Boston University *International Relations Review*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown 2017: Sarah Annes Brown: "The Classical Pantheon in Children's Fantasy Literature", in: *Classical Traditions in Modern Fantasy*, edited by Brett M. Rogers / Benjamin Eldon Stevens, New York.
- Cartledge 2005: Paul Cartledge, "Why/How Does Classics Matter?", in: *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 4 (2), 185–199.
- Dyson 2006: Stephen L. Dyson, *In Pursuit of Ancient Pasts: a History of Classical Archaeology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, New Haven.
- Lamb 1979: M. E. Lamb, "A Midsummer-Night's Dream: The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur.", in: *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 21 (4) 478–491.
- Collins 2008: Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*, New York.
- Graf 1996: Fritz Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, Baltimore.
- Griffiths 2019: Anthony J.F. Griffiths et al., "Heredity; Prescientific Conceptions of Heredity", in: *Britannica*, URL: <https://www.britannica.com/science/heredity-genetics>, last accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019.
- Levithan 2018: David Levithan, "Suzanne Collins Talks About 'The Hunger Games', the Books and the Movies", *The New York Times Online*, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/18/books/suzanne-collins-talks-about-the-hunger-games-the-books-and-the-movies.html>, last accessed: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018.
- Mack 1994: Jane Barnes Mack, "The Role of the Canon in Western Education", in: *Hito-tsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 26 (1) 7–16.
- March 2008: Jenny March, *The Penguin Book of Classical Myths*, London.
- Oakley 2013: John H. Oakley, *The Greek Vase: Art of the Storyteller*, Los Angeles.
- Plutarch: "The Life of Theseus", in: *Lives. Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, *Loeb Classical Library* 46, 1914, Cambridge, Mass.

---

<sup>23</sup> Rogers (2017) 14.

Renault 1958: Mary Renault, *The King Must Die*, London.

Rogers / Stevens 2017: Brett M. Rogers / Benjamin Eldon Stevens, “Introduction: Fantasies of Antiquity”, in: *Classical Traditions in Modern Fantasy*, edited by Brett M. Rogers, and Benjamin Eldon Stevens, New York.

Sophocles, *Sophocles I. Antigone, Oedipus the King, and Oedipus at Colonus*. Edited and Translated by Mark Griffith et al. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2013, Chicago.

Walker 1995: Henry J. Walker, “The Early Development of the Theseus Myth”, in: *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 138 (1) 1–33.

---

# BUCHREZENSION

Martin Vöhler, *Pindarrezeptionen: Sechs Studien zum Wandel des Pindarverständnisses von Erasmus bis Herder*, Heidelberg: Winter 2005.

Angela Conzo

1. Im Zeitraum zwischen 1500 und 1800 kam es zu einer Pindar-Renaissance, die durch die antike Kanonisierung des griechischen Autors durch Horaz, Quintilian und Longin begünstigt wurde, die als erste dazu beitrugen, dass Pindar im Kanon der antiken Lyrik (wie Homer in der Epik) eine zentrale Stellung einnahm. In jenen Jahren gehörte Pindar zum literarischen „Spitzenkanon“,<sup>1</sup> so dass es fast unmöglich war, den Autor des hohen Stils (*genus sublime*) zu ignorieren.

Das hier rezensierte Buch – geschrieben von Martin Vöhler, Professor für Klassische Philologie an der Aristoteles-Universität Thessaloniki – beschäftigt sich mit Pindarrezeptionen und dem Wandel des europäischen Pindarverständnisses. Für die vorliegende Arbeit erhielt M. Vöhler den „Heidelberger Förderpreis für klassisch-philologische Theoriebildung“ des Jahres 2005 und ihm verdanken wir die hervorragende Rekonstruktion der Wirkungsgeschichte Pindars von der Renaissance bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts, die durch unterschiedliche, aber produktive Widerspruchsverhältnisse gekennzeichnet ist.

Bereits in der Einleitung hebt Vöhler die Heterogenität der Pindar-Rezeptionen hervor, angefangen von der Rhetorik, Theologie und Philosophie bis zur Etymologie, Übersetzungstheorie, Kulturgeschichte, Poetologie und Philosophiegeschichte. Das Buch ist in sechs Kapitel/Studien unterteilt, die exemplarisch poetische und literarische Neuformulierungen von Pindars Oden aus ganz Europa vorstellen.

Diese Entwicklung der Pindarnachfolge beginnt in Italien, wo um 1500 Schriftsteller wie Politiano, Gyraldus, Trissino und Alamanno als erste den griechischen Autor wiederentdeckten. Von dort geht es weiter nach Frankreich zu Pierre Ronsards Odes Pindariques (1550), die bald eine eigenständige literarische Gattung begründeten. Diese Form erreichte England und Deutschland, wo der Bereich der künstlerischen Rezeption von der philologischen Forschung unterschieden wurde.

Eine vertiefte Analyse der einzelnen Kapitel verdeutlicht, dass Vöhler der Rezeptionsgeschichte wichtige Impulse gegeben hat und einen Wendepunkt markiert.

---

<sup>1</sup> Heydebrandt (1998) 615.

**2.** Das erste Kapitel „Pindar in Sprichwörtern: die *Adagia* des Erasmus“ (12–35) legt das Augenmerk auf die Wiederentdeckung Pindars im Rahmen der *Adagia* des Erasmus, der das Interesse seiner Zuhörer listig und folgenreich auf Pindar lenkte, der nach Vöhler „in immer neuen Filiationen und Schwerpunktverschiebungen wahrgenommen wird“ (8). Erasmus von Rotterdam griff bei der Sammlung der *Adagia* (einer Sprichwortsammlung) auf die pindarische Gnomik zurück, weil er darin einen reichen Schatz an „Sprichwörter[n]“ fand, die er umarbeitete, um sie für das Publikum besser nutzbar und zugänglich zu machen. Er übersetzt und kommentiert alle schwer verständlichen gnomischen Partien der Epinikien,<sup>2</sup> damit sie für den sprichwörtlichen Gebrauch aufbereitet werden können. Wie bereits erwähnt, wird Pindar durch die Vermittlung von Erasmus bekannt und zitierfähig.

In der Tat zitiert Erasmus Pindar 176 Mal, denn in Pindars Gedichten gibt es viele Metaphern und Wendungen, die für den Zweck der *Adagia* geeignet sind. Erasmus nahm in seiner Sammlung auch einige pindarische Themen auf wie Neid, Talent und Erfolg, den Schicksalswechsel, die Unbeständigkeit. Er löst die pindarischen Sprichwörter aus ihrem Kontext innerhalb der Epinikien heraus, um das pragmatische Ziel der Sammlung zu verfolgen. Vöhler nennt in diesem Zusammenhang das Beispiel des Adagiums *Homo bulla* (2.3.48): Erasmus zitiert die abschließenden Verse der achten Pythie,<sup>3</sup> aber er lässt die Transzendenz des Ephemeren – die bei Pindar zentral ist – außen vor, um den negativen Aspekt der Gedankenbewegung zu isolieren.

Zusammenfassend ebnete Erasmus durch seine *Adagia* den Weg für die protestantische Rezeption von Zwingli und Melanchthon, die Pindar als Bruder Davids bezeichneten.

**3.** Das zweite Kapitel „Zur englischen Pindarrenaissance: Die Tradition der *Pindaricks* bei Jonson, Cowley und Gray“ (36–89) beginnt mit Beobachtungen zur Entwicklung der *Pindaricks* als eigenständiger Gattung. Hier legt Vöhler den Schwerpunkt auf drei ihrer Repräsentanten – Ben Jonson, Abraham Cowley und Thomas Gray –, die nach dem Vorbild Pindars innovative Formen der Lyrik erprobten. Jonson komponiert, nach Vöhler, ein echtes pindarisches Gedicht: Er kombiniert epideiktischen Ton mit persönlicher Reflexion. Das Ergebnis ist eine eindrucksvolle Balance zwischen Antike und Christentum, Epitaph – ursprünglich ein Grabspruch oder -gedicht – und Lobpreisung, Mythos und Heilsgeschichte, so Vöhler. Es trägt den Titel *Cary-Morison Ode*,<sup>4</sup> weil sie zwei Aristokraten gewidmet ist: dem jungen Henry Morison – der im Alter von nur 20 Jahren starb – und Sir Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland. Aber besonderes Augenmerk liegt hier auf der Anpassung der Reihenfolge der Verse an die strenge Triadenform Pindars mit all ihren Responsionen – etwas, das zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte der englischen Lyrik zu sehen ist.

---

<sup>2</sup> Vgl. Bischoff (1938).

<sup>3</sup> P. 8, 95–96: „Tagwesen, Was aber ist einer? Was aber ist einer nicht? / Der Schatten Traum sind Menschen“ (Hölderlins Übersetzung, FHA 15, 293, v. 135f.).

<sup>4</sup> Vgl. dazu Jonson (1947).

Cowley komponiert hingegen eine programmatische und propagandistische Sammlung von *Pindarique Odes, Written in Imitation of the Stile and Manner of the Odes of Pindar*. Cowley gibt in der Vorrede zu den Pindarischen Oden die philologischen Schwierigkeiten bei der Pindarübersetzung zu.<sup>5</sup> Er weist auf die historische Differenz von der pindarischen und der eigenen Zeit hin. Hieran anschließend analysiert Vöhler die englische Version seiner *Pindarique Ode*, die nach Vöhler „völlig unregelmäßig erscheint“ (59).

Neue und produktive Möglichkeiten für die Entwicklung von Pindars Lyrik können in Thomas Grays *Progress of Poesy* als programmatischen Gegenentwurf zu Cowleys populären *Pindaricks* und in dem Folgegedicht *The Bard* gesehen werden. Im *Progress* reflektiert Gray die Grundlagen und Tradition der eigenen Dichtung, in *The Bard* wird ein moderner Nachfolger Pindars vorgestellt.

4. Im dritten Kapitel „Winckelmann und sein Lehrer Christian Tobias Damm“ (90–116) wendet sich Vöhler der Entwicklung der modernen Pindarrezeption durch Christian Tobias Damms Griechischunterricht und der Bedeutung Pindars in Winckelmanns Arbeiten zu (*Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* wie auch *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*). Der deutsche Altphilologe Christian Tobias Damm verehrte Pindar nicht als lyrisches Genie, sondern als gelehrten Dichter (*poeta doctus*) und er nutzte die Epinikien als Material für linguistische, etymologische und lexikalische Forschungen. So erschienen alle Pindar-Oden erstmals in einer dreibändigen deutschen Übersetzung.<sup>6</sup> Neben seinen Übersetzungen, die sich an Leser mit unterschiedlichen Sprachkenntnissen richteten, verfasste Damm ein umfangreiches etymologisches Wörterbuch<sup>7</sup> auf der Grundlage des Lexikons von Homer und Pindar. Hier legt Vöhler den Schwerpunkt auf die *Pindar-Notate* Winckelmanns, die Scholien und Kommentare zu Homer, Pindar, Euripides, Aristophanes, Sophokles und anderen Dichtern enthalten. Winckelmanns Umgang mit diesen Materialien ist bezeichnend: Seine Anmerkungen sind knapp, selektiv und konzentriert, das Ergebnis einer philologischen Strategie, die darauf abzielt, den antiken Text zu vertiefen, strittige Fragen zu klären und die Lektüre der Texte zu erleichtern. Winckelmanns profunde Kenntnis der antiken Autoren zeigt sich aber vor allem in seinen *Gedanken über die Nachahmung* (1755), in denen Pindar eine unverkennbar markante Stellung einnimmt.

5. Im Kapitel 4 „Pindar in den deutschen Übersetzungen des 18. Jahrhunderts (von Gottsched bis Voß)“ (117–143) hält Vöhler zunächst fest, dass die Pindarrezeption, die symbolisch in die Kultur der Empfindsamkeit und des Sturms und Drangs eingebettet war, das ganze 18. Jahrhundert hindurch in Deutschland aktiv und produktiv blieb. Dies zeigt die dichte Folge von deutschen Übersetzungen zwischen Gottsched und Voß. Johann

<sup>5</sup> Cowley (1964) 4 sagt in der Vorrede: “If a Man should undertake to translate *Pindar* Word for Word, it would be thought that one Mad-man had translated *another*.”

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. Damm (1770–1771).

<sup>7</sup> Vgl. Damm (1765).

Christoph Gottscheds Übersetzung der 12. und 4. *Olympie* – die er aus dokumentarischem Interesse angefertigt hat – erscheint in der *Critischen Dichtkunst* von 1751.<sup>8</sup> Gottsched konzentriert sich nämlich auf das, was Vöhler „Pindars Schreibart“ (122) nennt, indem Gottsched die Merkmale seines Stils und die „Regeln“ der enkomiastischen Ode erläutert.<sup>9</sup> Nach Vöhler erweitern diese „erklärenden Ergänzungen“ das Feld der Pindar-Rezeption, weil sie dem deutschen Publikum eine schwer verständliche Literaturgattung zugänglich machen. Johann Jacob Bodmer und Johann Jacob Breitinger<sup>10</sup> argumentierten mit ihrem Übersetzungsansatz gegen das Deutlichkeitsgebot Gottscheds. Dies führt zunächst zu dem – wie Vöhler im zweiten Teil des Kapitels (131–137) aufzeigt – „philologischen Zugang“ von Christian Tobias Damm und Friedrich Gedike. Sie übersetzen die Oden Pindars mit unterschiedlichen Strategien. Damm greift in seiner Prosaübersetzung Pindars Stropheneinteilung und Wortexplikation auf und bringt den Pindartext in einen schlichten Ton. Gedike hingegen verzichtet auf die triadische Form und tendiert zu einem eleganten Stil, den er (in Anlehnung an Lessing) „poetische Prosa“ nennt.<sup>11</sup> Hiervon zeugen die Übersetzungen von Goethe, Herder und Voß als jungen Literaten und Genieverehrern.

**6.** Im Kapitel 5 „Grenzen der Pindarnachfolge: *Wandrer's Sturmlied*“ (144–158) behandelt Vöhler Goethes ersten pindarischen Hymnus, der von Vöhler als wichtige Referenz für das Studium der enthusiastischen Dichtung in der Moderne angesehen wird. Im *Sturmlied*<sup>12</sup> erinnert Goethe an „den halben Olymp“<sup>13</sup> und an die griechische Mythologie: Er nennt Anakreon und Theokrit als bedeutende Lyriker, findet aber schließlich in Pindar den großen griechischen Dichter. Goethe bricht deutsche Grammatikregeln, *pindarisiert* (147) die Wortbildung, fügt Archaismen ein und erfindet Neologismen. Hymne, Lobpreis und Gebet verbinden sich mit Mythen und poetologischen Reflexionen in einem vielfarbigen Mosaik. Aber doch wie Vöhler selbst zugibt: „Wandrer's Sturmlied gehört in die lyrische Tradition der *recusatio*“ (155), also einer Zurückweisung eines bestimmten dichterischen Stils oder Genres, zumeist aus wahrgenommenem eigenem Unvermögen. Der Pindarstil wird zum Vorbild, dem Goethes eigenes Gedicht gewissermaßen immer bewusst unterlegen ist. Die häufigen Begeisterungsflüge stoßen auf eine Ironie, die dem Pindar-Modell eine spezifisch moderne Wendung gibt.

**7.** Im Kapitel 6 „Herders Auseinandersetzung mit Pindar“ (159–179) untersucht Vöhler Herders Wendepunkt in der Pindarrezeption, um zu erklären, wie Pindar zu einem Paradigma des *poeta doctus* wird. Herders Pindarkenntnis geht weit über den Lehrplan der

---

<sup>8</sup> Gottsched (1982).

<sup>9</sup> Vgl. Gottsched (1982) 431, wo er die Regeln ausführt.

<sup>10</sup> Schweizer Schriftsteller und Literaten, die 1720 die ‚Gesellschaft der Maler‘ und 1721 die Zeitschrift *Die Discourse der Mahlern* gründeten. In ihren Hauptwerken ging es um die Akzeptanz der Regel der Nachahmung der Natur und der künstlerischen Wahrhaftigkeit zum Nachteil der schöpferischen Fantasie.

<sup>11</sup> Gedike (1777), unpaginiertes Vorwort.

<sup>12</sup> HA 1,33–36.

<sup>13</sup> Heinel (1973) 70.

theologischen Ausbildung der Zeit hinaus. Er übersetzte zahlreiche Oden und kommentierte gleichzeitig die ersten deutschen Übersetzungsversuche von Steinbrüchel, Damm und Gedike. In einer deutlich anticlassizistischen Haltung sieht Herder in Pindar ein *remedium* (Lat.: Heilmittel) für die moderne Prosa; den Ausgangspunkt, von dem aus sich die moderne Lyrik bestimmen kann. Dies könne aber nur gelingen, nach Herder, wenn der moderne Künstler die unterschiedlichen individuellen, nationalen und lokalen Kontexte berücksichtige. Darüber hinaus nimmt Pindar im Kapitel „Von der Griechischen Literatur in Deutschland“ von Herders erstem großen Werk *Über die Neuere Deutsche Literatur* (1766–1767) neben Homer eine prominente Stellung ein.<sup>14</sup>

8. Vöhlers Studie regt, in einem gut lesbaren, engagierten Ton geschrieben, zum neuen Nachdenken an und schafft die Grundlage für ein deutlicheres Bild der mehrpoligen Pindarrezeptionen – ein Thema, von dem man zu Unrecht annehmen könnte, es sei genügend beackert und erschöpfend behandelt worden. Für die in Vöhlers Buch behandelten Autoren, Länder und Epochen ist die konsultierte Bibliografie sehr zufriedenstellend, aktuell, relevant und reichhaltig. Das Werk, das Professor Vöhler uns hier vorlegt, ist eine Erweiterung früherer Werke zum Thema, aus denen er das Beste herauszuholen weiß und um Eigenes ergänzt, um ein reiches, kohärentes und klares Ganzes zu schaffen. Der fachliche Wert von Vöhlers Buch liegt gerade darin, dass es systematisch ein vollständiges und umfassendes Bild der Neuformulierungen und Rezeption pindarischer Oden in ihren prägnanten und wichtigen Stationen beschreibt.

Insgesamt lässt sich sagen, dass Vöhler es schafft, große Mengen an Informationen für den\*die Leser\*in gewinnbringend zu organisieren, übersichtlich darzustellen und mit einem klaren Ziel zu präsentieren: Dank *Pindarrezeptionen: Sechs Studien zum Wandel des Pindarverständnisses von Erasmus bis Herder* haben wir nun ein umfangreiches Werk zur Fülle der unterschiedlichen Bilder, die einflussreiche moderne Nachahmer und Gelehrte von Pindar geschaffen haben, zur Hand. Dem Buch sei eine breite Leserschaft gewünscht.

angelaconzo1@gmail.com

**ÜBER DIE AUTORIN** Angela Conzo hat ihren M. A.-Titel in Deutscher und Englischer Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft mit einer experimentellen Masterarbeit über Friedrich Hölderlins Pindar-Übersetzungen (Titel: *Hölderlin übersetzt Pindar: Die Semantik von Schicksal in der deutschen Übersetzung der Oden*) im Juli 2021 an der Universität von Neapel *L'Orientale* erhalten. Derzeit arbeitet sie als Forscherin im Bereich der deutschen Literatur. Zu ihren Interessen gehören neben der Klassischen Philologie und germanistischen Literaturwissenschaft literarische Übersetzungen, Komparatistik, deutscher Philhellenismus und Geschichtsphilosophie.

<sup>14</sup> Vgl. Herder (1969).

**BIBLIOGRAPHIE**

- Bischoff 1938: H. Bischoff, *Gnomen Pindars*, Würzburg.
- Cowley 1969: A. Cowley, *Verse und Prose*, in: Alexander B. Grosart (ed.), *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose by Abraham Cowley* vol. 2, Hildesheim.
- Damm 1765: C. T. Damm, *Novum Lexikon graecum etymologicum et reale cui pro basi substratae sunt concordantiae et elucidationes Homericae et Pindaricae cum indice universali alphabetico*, Berlin.
- Damm 1770–1771: C. T. Damm, *Versuch einer prosaischen Übersetzung des Pindar. Vier Abteilungen, Konvolut*, Berlin / Leipzig.
- Gedike 1777: F. Gedike, *Pindars Olympische Sieghymnen*. Verdeutsch von F. G., öffentlichem Lehrer am Friedrichwerderschen Gymnasium zu Berlin, Berlin / Leipzig.
- Gottsched 1982: J. C. Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst durchgehends mit den Exempeln unserer besten Dichter erläutert*, Darmstadt [Nachdruck der 4. Vermehrten Auflage, Leipzig 1751].
- Heinel 1973: H. Heinel, „Der Wanderer in der Not: Goethes Wandrers Sturmlied und Harzreise im Winter“, in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 47.
- Herder 1969: J. G. Herder, *Über die Neuere Deutsche Literatur*, hrsg. von A. Gilles, Oxford.
- Heydebrand 1998: R. v. Heydebrand, „Kanon macht Kultur – Versuch einer Zusammenfassung“, in: R. v. Hydebrandt (Hg.), *Kanon – Macht – Kultur. Theoretische, historische und soziale Aspekte ästhetischer Kanonbildung*, Stuttgart / Weimar, 613–625.
- Jonson 1947: B. Jonson, „Vol. 8: The Poems; The Prose Works“, in: *Complete Critical Edition*, ed. by Charles H. Herford et al., Oxford
- Winckelmann (1755): J. J. Winckelmann, „Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst“, in: ders., *Kleine Schriften, Vorreden, Entwürfe*, Berlin.