JOURNAL FOR TRANSCULTURAL PRESENCES &
DIACHRONIC IDENTITIES FROM ANTIQUITY TO DATE

thersites

19/2024

Matthias Heinemann,
Adrian Weiß & Christine Walde (eds.)

Fantastic antiquities and where to find them: ancient worlds in (post-)modern novels

www.thersites-journal.de

Imprint

Universität Potsdam 2024
Historisches Institut, Professur Geschichte des Altertums
Am Neuen Palais 10, 14469 Potsdam (Germany)
https://www.thersites-journal.de/

ISSN 2364-7612

Contact
Principal Contact
Prof. Dr. Filippo Carlà-Uhink
Email: thersitesjournal@uni-potsdam.de
Support Contact
PD Dr. Christian Rollinger
Email: thersitesjournal@uni-potsdam.de

Layout and Typesetting
text plus form, Dresden

Cover pictures:
Left – Created with Microsoft Designer (DALL-E 3)
Right – Created with ChatGPT-4 (DALL-E 3)

Published online at:
https://doi.org/10.34679/thersites.vol19

JOURNAL FOR TRANSCULTURAL PRESENCES &
DIACHRONIC IDENTITIES FROM ANTIQUITY TO DATE

thersites

19/2024 | pp. 380 – 409

RONALD BLANKENBORG
(Radboud University Nijmegen)

'The Wide Canvas of Human Drama'

Fantasizing Antiquity Through Graphic Novel

Abstract This paper argues that representation of classical antiquity through graphic novel runs a risk of idealizing reconstructed antiquity. In a way similar to the archaic and classical Greek representation in visual arts of the content of heroic (fragmentary) epic, 21st-century retelling in *Age of Bronze* fantasizes with regard to both narratology and outlook. In 1998 Eisner Award-wining cartoonist Eric Shanower started *Age of Bronze,* a serialized Trojan War account, 34 episodes of which have appeared up to date. The graphic novelization aims to 'present the complete story of the world-famous War at Troy, freshly retold for the 21st century'. Its format serves to have 'all the drama of the ancient and thrilling tradition unfold before your eyes.' As its sources it lists Homer's *Iliad,* works from classical, medieval and renaissance literature, and archaeological excavations. The artist uses different styles for episodes from various sources, thus imitating the archaic and classical vase paintings' attempt to stereotype the narrative in visual representation. Shanower's detailed processing of contemporary visualization enforces a new standard of the heroic world's representation. The decision to translate antiquity's patchwork of stories, fragments and testimonia into a single all-encompassing thread echoes both ancient epics' tendency to 'contain', and novels' to work against *medias in res.* The series' attempt 'to be true to all traditions' does cater 'those who think visually', but envisions, I argue, a fantasy rather than 'Troy sprung to life'.

Keywords Graphic novel, *Age of Bronze,* Eric Shanower, retelling, idealized antiquity

Articles

URL https://thersites-journal.de
DOI https://doi.org/10.34679/thersites.vol19.282

RECONSTRUCTING ANTIQUITY

Classical antiquity has been reconstructed as many times as it has been received;[1] this goes for epic narrative as well as for any other cultural expression originating in the world of the ancient Greeks and Romans.[2] The earliest instances of reception of, for example, archaic Greek epic reconstructed what they received through imitation and elaboration.[3] From there reception required more constructivism, as the gap between the received and the receiver grew wider, both in time and in conceptualization.[4] Reception often equaled either idolization or demonization, deliberate use of abuse of what was considered the classical tradition or legacy. Only recently classical reception has evolved into an academic discipline, offering the incentive for scholars to move away from too modernistic approaches of 'antiquity'.[5] Such approaches remain very much

1 Hardwick (2003); Martindale (2006); Budelmann & Haubold (2008); Renger & Solomon (2012) 1–14; Hutcheon & O'Flynn (2013); Kallendorf (2017); De Pourcq, De Haan & Rijser (2020) 1–12; Quiroga Puertas & Olabarria (2024); Bakogianni & Unceta Gómez (2024).

2 Graziosi (2008); Hopkins (2008); Roisman (2008); Davis (2008).

3 Simms (2018); Hunter (2018); Manolea (2022).

4 Landfester & Hinz (2015); Tatum (2014) 90–91, discussing literary reception, refers to Martindale's use of 'vulgar historicism (the view that we can know the past as it really was, untainted by what came after) and an equally vulgar presentism (the view that everything is wholly adapted to what we think in the present)': 'The linking of two –isms and the repetition of "vulgar" is carefully crafted. Since Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* "historicism" has served as a term of abuse; it inspired the more recent "presentism," coined to identify still another professional transgression that no reputable classicist would want to be guilty of.' In retrospect, the same holds true for every receiver.

5 Greenwood (2016) 41 'In spite of connotations of classics and the classical as an established tradition based around a stable canon, Greek and Roman classical antiquity has never been a fixed object of study. It has changed as our knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome has grown and shifted, and as a function of history, intellectual movements, and taste. Classicists have turned to classical reception studies in an attempt to chart some of the different encounters that various historical audiences have had with Greek and Roman classics, and this wave of research poses interdisciplinary questions about the relation of Greek and Roman classics to world literatures and cultures. The emphasis on classical reception studies offers fresh ways of thinking about the cultural mobility of the classics without appealing to discredited, old-fashioned notions of "timeless importance" or "universal value".'

alive, though, outside academia, in popular culture.[6] This paper argues that representation of classical antiquity through graphic novel runs a continued risk of idealizing reconstructed antiquity – *inspired by* academia.[7]

ANTIQUITY IN NOVELIZATION

In itself, the idealizing of antiquity in graphic novelization is no novelty of course: in the various modern reception products of especially the epic tradition,[8] there had been a century-long tendency to interpret epic, and mythologizing narrative in general, as 'sword-and-sandal'.[9] Especially in its visual representation in film, antiquity's epic may be summarized as:[10]

---

6 Lowe & Shahabudin (2009); Lozano Gómez, Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas & Alarcón Hernández (2019) 9–24; Nisbet (2020).

7 Schein (2008).

8 Graphic novelization is a relatively newly developed reception medium. Though precursors have been acknowledged from as early as the 19th century, the term *graphic novel* was coined in the early 1960s and gained popularity from there, especially with the publication of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986) (Couch [2000]; Schelley [2010] 117). As a reception medium of classical antiquity graphic novelization has concentrated primarily on representing mythology, e.g., in George O'Connor's *Olympians* series (2010–2022), the *Promethea* series by Allen Moore, J. H. Willimas III, and Mick Gray (1999–2005), Ryan Foley's *Zeus and the Rise of the Olympians* (2012), and *Greek Street,* contextualizing Greek mythology in a modern London setting (2009–2010) by Peter Milligan and Davide Gainfelice.

9 O'Brien (2014); Adriaensens (2017) 137 '[…] the sword-and-sandal or peplum film, where a Greco-Roman or ersatz classical context provides the perfect backdrop for spectacular special effects, muscular heroes, and fantastic mythological creatures. The 1960s and 1970s proved a fruitful breeding ground, with stop-motion wizard Ray Harryhausen contributing heavily to the successful animation of mythical statues in *Jason and the Argonauts* (Don Chaffey, 1963), *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (Gordon Hessler, 1973), *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (Sam Wanamaker, 1977), and *Clash of the Titans* (Desmond Davis, 1981); and after a second wave in the 1980s with sword-and-sorcery films such as *Conan the Destroyer* (Richard Fleischer, 1984), the trend surfaced once again in the 2010s with the action-packed Perseus chronicle *Clash of the Titans* (Louis Leterrier, 2010) and *Wrath of the Titans* (Jonathan Liebesman, 2012), and the teen updates *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* (Chris Columbus, 2010) and *Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters* (Thor Freudenthal, 2013).' Exhaustive listing of sword-and-sandal movies in Kinnard and Crnkovich (2017) and Simões Rodrigues (2021).

10 Gunsberg (2005) 97–132; Pomeroy (2008); Dumont (2009); Cornelius (2011) 1–13; Kon-

- Half-naked, bronzed muscle-men, usually black-haired;
- Half-naked, beautiful women;
- Gigantic, usually remarkedly white gods and goddesses;
- High-rise marble-white palaces;
- High-rise steep cliffs and mountains;
- Burning sun and endless dust.

The genre has grown conscious of its inclination to idealize quite one-sidedly. This awareness has resulted in very diverse reception products. On the one hand, there is the over-the-top representation of sword-and-sandal as an equivalent for historical events that are deemed heroic, even on a par with the marvelous achievements from myth. The best known example is the 2006 movie *300,* visualizing the attempt of the Spartan soldiers under the command of their king Leonidas and with the aid of few allies, to halt the invasion of southern Greece by the Persian army.[11] The movie was itself a direct adaptation of a 1998 graphic novel by Mark Miller, and carefully imitated not only its depiction of both the Spartan and the Persian troops and individuals, but also copied the remarkable color scheme of the original: red and yellow, blood and dust are prominent, and practically the only colors used. (Fig. 1)

On the other hand, there is the attempt to steer away from the prototypical white-and-male rendering of both heroes and gods in, for example, the Trojan

stantinos (2013) 1–17; O'Brien 2014; but cf. Prorokova and Smith in Nicholas (2018) 195–207, 208–217.

11 Lauwers, Dhont & Huybrecht (2013) 89 'Snyder's narration of the battle in Thermopylae lifts this event out of the field of history into the realm of mythology. Indeed, when considered from the consideration of genre, *300* bears closer resemblance to the fantastic mythological movies and series around heroes like Hercules than to historical television documentaries that purport to portray an event just as it "really" happened. The genre of these mythological movies calls for its own particular characteristics and stereotypes. *300* has modeled its gender image after these demands by highlighting the omnipresence of a hypermasculine perspective and by almost exclusively valuing typically male virtues. Nevertheless, *300* is more than just an artistic exercise in mythography. It also offers a piece of historical truth, albeit not a factual truth, but a truth of mentality history'; Beigel (2013) 73 'the entire film [...] makes selective use of single elements of the classical tradition mixed with modern conceptions, thus producing an unhistorical amalgam. And so, a large number of critics considered *300* historically inaccurate. On the other hand, such distinguished scholars as Victor Davis Hanson and Mary Bean insisted that a film which uses several more or less historical details cannot be that wrong.'

Figure 1 A still from the move *300* (left) and the cover of the graphic novel *300* by Frank Miller (right).

War, as in the 2018 series *Troy: Fall of a city*. The casting of black actors to portray Achilles, Zeus, and Athena led to the allegation of 'blackwashing', but equally to revival of the debate on 'Classical ignorance'. Tim Whitmarsh has argued that historical Greeks were 'unlikely to be uniformly pale-skinned', that 'dark-skinned North Africans existed' in ancient Greece, citing Memnon of Ethiopia as an example. He also stated that the ancient Greeks did not have a concept of 'race', adding that '[o]ur best estimate is that the Greeks would be a spectrum of hair colours and skin types in antiquity. I don't think there's any reason to doubt they were Mediterranean in skin type (lighter than some and darker than other Europeans), with a fair amount of inter-mixing' and that there is no single, absolutely definitive version of the Trojan War story: 'Homer's poems are merely one version and the Greeks themselves understood the story could change… There's never been an authentic retelling of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* – they've always been fluid texts. They're not designed to be set in stone and it's not blasphemous to change them.'[12]

That Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were 'not designed to be set in stone' has of course been clear from the very start of the archaic Greek epic tradition[13] and

12 Cited in Ling (2018).

13 Finkelberg (2000) 1, citing Nagy's stance that 'up to the middle of the second century B.C.E., till the completion of Aristarchus' editorial work on the Homeric text, this text was

its reception:[14] both epics start at rather random points in time, as explained by their respective proems.[15] Both epics reflect developments from a tradition that enabled epic narrative to grow and shrink, to incorporate stories from various sources and to cater to different audiences.[16] For both epics, the completion, in the burial of Hector and the appeasement of the suitors' relatives respectively, has been contested:[17] are we indeed looking at the ending as Homer intended, or are both epics artificially brought to completion by a later editor or group of editors?[18] In some manuscripts, tradition tells us, the *Iliad* was immediately followed by the *Aethiopis,* an epic poem from the so-called epic cycle.[19] What singled the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* out, in a broadly accepted approach among scholars, is their alleged panhellenism: as Gregory Nagy has argued, the two

---

undergoing a so-called "crystallization" process: it gradually evolved from a state of relative fluidity to one of relative rigidity, and it continued to preserve a certain degree of multiformity at each stage of this development, that is, even after it had been first fixed in writing. On this interpretation, the tradition of the oral performance of Homer continued to influence the written text of the Homeric poems, so that "the variants of Homeric textual tradition reflect for the most part the multiforms of a performance tradition", allows for such fluidity only for the Cycle Epics: 'the written transmission of the Cyclic epics displays the same multiformity at all stages of their existence, thus reflecting in the written form the multiformity of the oral tradition. But there has always been only one version of the *Iliad.* This can only indicate that at some early stage the history of the Homeric text became not simply a history of a written text, but a history of a written text that was also considered canonical in the civilization to which it belonged. In that, its status was closer to the status of the Bible than to that of the *Chanson de Roland* or the *Nibelungenlied.* We should continue, then, to speak of this text in terms of emendations, interpolations, scribal errors, and other phenomena that are characteristic of manuscript transmission' (11).

14 Graziosi (2002).

15 Wheeler (2002) 41–43.

16 As well as allowing 'rhapsodes to gain a competitive edge by branding their performances of the *Iliad* with their own identities through the unique interpretations of the Homeric epic that the proems generated', Tomasso (2016) 379.

17 Overviews in Richardson (1993) 21–24 (no discussion in Brügger [2017]), and Russo, Fernandez-Galiano & Heubeck (1992) 353–355.

18 Kelly (2007) argues for the 'decreasing doublet', the compositional technique where the placement of a larger element directly before a smaller one emphasizes the significance of the prior, larger element, and signals closure of the text, as a consistent strategy of closure in early hexametric poetry.

19 Schol. T = *Aethiopis fr.* 1 West; cf. Burgess (2001) 140–142; Wheeler (2002) 42–44.

Homeric poems might have been the only products of the epic tradition that appealed to all Greek audiences, throughout the Greek-speaking world of antiquity: modern-day Greece, Türkiye, and southern Italy.[20]

But despite this panhellenism, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* remained fluid in performance throughout Greek antiquity, up until the first century BC.[21] They inspired and influenced storytelling in other genres, like tragedy and mythography, and were possibly themselves inspired by other-genre narrative developments. It remains uncertain at what point in time the Homeric epics got their definite form – that is, more or less the form in which we have them now: reconstructions differ in their dating from the sixth century (the famous Peisistrean recension), the late third century (in Alexandria), to the first century. In the course of this formation process, numerous additional and alternative story lines appeared and disappeared, some of them fueling traditions the reception of which is much better known to us than the assumed originals: the love affair of Achilles and Briseis, the killing of Troilos, Troy's youngest prince, the provenance of Paris, the wooden horse, the fall of Troy.[22] As in our day and age, the desire to construct a larger, complete story of Troy, beyond the truncated plots of *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* was very much alive in antiquity.[23] The various story lines represented in early archaic and classical vase painting testify to this deeply felt wish for co-

20 Nagy (1996); Nagy (2004); cf. Ross (2004).

21 Bird (2010).

22 A number of them preserved in the extant remnants of the Cycle epics, cf. Fantuzzi & Tsagalis (2015) 1–40.

23 Aptly summarized in Fantuzzi & Tsagalis (2015) 2 n. 3 '*Cypria* (end): capture of Briseis and Chryseis and catalogue of Trojans and Allies – *Iliad* (beginning): strife between Achilles and Agamemnon on Briseis and Catalogue of Ships and Catalogue of Trojans and Allies; *Iliad* (end): death of Hector – *Aethiopis* (beginning): mention of Hector's funeral; the Trojans ask Penthesileia to help them to make up for the loss of Hector; *Aethiopis* (end): stasis between Odysseus and Ajax about the arms of Achilles – *Ilias parva* (beginning): stasis between Odysseus and Ajax about the arms of Achilles; *Ilias parva* (end): Trojan horse enters the city – *Iliou persis* (beginning): Trojan horse enters the city; *Iliou persis* (end): Achaeans insult Athena by raping Cassandra – *Nostoi* (beginning): Athena makes Agamemnon and Menelaus fight over the question of whether or not they must appease the goddess before sailing away; *Nostoi* (end): murder of Agamemnon by Clytaemnestra – *Odyssey* (beginning): the gods recall Agamemnon's fate; *Odyssey* (end): decision reached about the burial of the suitors – *Telegony* (beginning): burial of the suitors by their relatives. Repetitions in the beginnings and endings of Trojan Cyclic epics are however a rather complex phenomenon: a line must be drawn between original overlappings (which may go back to oral epic tradition in the manner of

herent and consistent novelization: from a narratological perspective, the collection and convergence of storylines motivated poets, scholars and scholiasts to continue puzzling together, and supplementing to, an overarching narrative. Their constructive effort has led modern scholars to introduce a new generic term, mythography, to describe and analysis this process and its workings.[24]

EPIC IN GRAPHIC NOVELIZATION

Epic has proven a ready candidate for retelling in various and variant modern media.[25] Within Comics Theory, the specific suitability of graphic novelization for the retelling of epic has been duly noted.[26] In addition to, and partly in contrast with, the attempt to stay as close as possible to the presumed characteristics of the original,[27] the two trends in the novelization of antiquity as described above, the awareness of fragmentary and various provenance of epic material on the one hand and the wish for coherent and continuous storytelling on the other, apply to the retelling of archaic epic through graphic novelization. In a way similar to the archaic and classical Greek representation in visual arts of the content of heroic (fragmentary) epic, 21st-century retelling in *Age of Bronze* fantasizes aptly with regard to both narratology and outlook.[28]

---

narrative doublets and dwindling pendants) and editorial reworking, the former aiming at connecting an epic that narrates a distinct phase of the war to the next one, the latter trying to create a more smooth and linear narrative progression.'

24 A summary and criticism of the development and use of the term in Calame (2023).

25 Including podcast dramatic retelling and the recent trend of epic mythology retelling from a feminine perspective (Haynes [2020]), cf. the acknowledgement as a reception work of the translation of the *Iliad* (2023) and the *Odyssey* (2018) by Emily Wilson.

26 Kovacs (2011).

27 The Marvel graphic novel by R. Thomas & M. A. Sepulveda, *The Iliad. Adapted from the Epic Poem by Homer,* Marvel Characters, Inc. (2010) reuses for both the narrator's text and for all direct speech a translation of Homer's *Iliad.*

28 Myrsiades (2008) xi 'After 2700 years on the best seller list, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in English translation are still required reading in most college/university basic world literature courses, judging from their inclusion in most introductory world literature texts (The Norton Anthology, The Longman Anthology, The Bedford Anthology). Interest in Homer in

Figure 2 Installments of Eric Shanower's *Age of Bronze.*

In 1998 Eisner Award-wining cartoonist Eric Shanower started *Age of Bronze,* a serialized Trojan War account, 34 episodes of which have appeared up to date.[29] The episodes have been published online, and were later published in issues comprising several episodes. All the episodes are to an extent self-standing as suggested by their titles ('A Thousand Ships'; 'Betrayal'; 'Sacrifice' [Fig. 2]) and the foreknowledge required by the reader.

As the website of both the series and the author states, the graphic novelization aims to 'present the complete story of the world-famous War at Troy, freshly retold for the 21st century'. Its format serves, so the website claims, to

the 21st century seems to be stronger than ever. The most recent of the over two dozen translations of Homer's *Iliad* and/or *Odyssey* in the last 50 years has just been published (The *Iliad,* trans. Herbert Jordan, University of Oklahoma Press). Since 1990 there have been eight new English translations of the *Odyssey* and six of the *Iliad* [...]. New critical studies on Homer since 2000 seem to be on the rise [...]. A renewed interest by historians and critics questioning the authenticity of the Trojan War and Troy has generated a number of new books (Bryce, 2006, Burgess 2001, Castledon 2006, Latacz 2001, Lowenstam 2008, Strauss 2006, Thomas and Conant 2005, and Thompson 2004), which have appeared in the last few years [...]. Even the graphic novel has appropriated Homer in the projected seven volume series of Eric Shanower, of which three volumes (27 installments; see Works Cited) have already been published.' Cf. Jha (2016) on Indian epic.

29 With emphasis on eroticism Sulprizio (2011). Shanower provided an extra in Kovacs & Marschall (2011) 195–206.

have 'all the drama of the ancient and thrilling tradition unfold before your eyes.' As its sources it lists Homer's *Iliad,* works from classical Greece and Rome (notably Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*), medieval and renaissance literature (Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*), and 'archaeological excavations of the places where the story took place: Mycenae, Knossos, and Pylos, among others, and especially Troy itself.'[30] Needless to say, however, *Age of Bronze* is not a graphic novelization of the literary works mentioned as its sources:[31] 'the final product is a version for the 21st century. All the comedy, all the tragedy, all the wide canvas of human drama of the Trojan War unfolds within the pages of *Age of Bronze.*' 'All the drama' requires a lot of monology, dialogue, and explicit sexuality to cater to 21st century taste.[32]

In many respects, the manner of storytelling in *Age of Bronze* resembles the epic storytelling of antiquity, while in some it runs counter to it. The result is an idealized remodeling of Greek epic's highly idiosyncratic patterning and serializing of tales: as memorized above, archaic Greek epic is by no means a continuum from which to freely draw episodes.[33] On the contrary, Greek epic is itself a genre typology in which different subgenres are brought together: narrative, genealogical, and antiquarian hexametric tales and fragments. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* stand out as larger-scale narratives against a background of miscel-

30 http://age-of-bronze.com/ (last accessed 27 February 2024).

31 As is, e.g., the Marvel graphic novel R. Thomas & M. A. Sepulveda, *The Iliad. Adapted from the Epic Poem by Homer,* Marvel Characters, Inc., (2010), see footnote 27 above.

32 Sulprizio (2011).

33 Ford (1992) 40 'stories belonging to the same general area of mythic history may be shaded into one another or isolated for individual treatment.' Burgess (2004) 3 'Cyclic performance would have occurred long before the textualization of the Epic Cycle in the early Hellenistic age, when it appears that a collection of previously independent epic poems were gathered together to form an "Epic Cycle." The Epic Cycle as we know it was manufactured by scholarly activity, quite independently of oral performance culture. Yet the texts used in this cycle must result from oral poetic traditions of the Archaic Age. From our earliest evidence it is apparent that mythological material was thought to cohere into certain units; a Heroic Age with chronologically arranged groupings of mythological tales, like the Theban wars and the Trojan war, is assumed in Homeric and Hesiodic poetry. So the Epic Cycle is a fixed and literate manifestation of a longstanding oral and notional arrangement of mythological material. Before the textualization of the Epic Cycle, then, oral performance of epic could on any given occasion be organized according to a notional "cycle" of myth. When the mythological cycle was actualized by epic performance, oral prototypes of the Epic Cycle would have resulted.'

laneous fragments and catalogue poetry, the latter of which are generally considered of inferior aesthetic quality when compared with the Homeric epics.[34] What brings the various epic types together under a single generic heading is primarily their metrical format, in combination with content that need not be considered as pertaining to actuality.[35] To illustrate the resemblances between archaic epic and Shanower's novelization with regard to the evaluation and aesthetic appreciation of storytelling, as well as with respect for the expression in a different medium: The artist uses different graphic styles for episodes from various sources. Particularly interesting is his choice to depict embedded antiquarian narratives like the destruction of Troy by Heracles in the preceding generation. For this reminiscence Shanower draws in a more naïve style, using thicker lines, a more schematic build-up of the frames, and a caricatural style for his story's characters, Heracles in particular.[36] (Fig. 3) Such style switching falls in with the acknowledged stylistic differences pointed out in embedded narrative in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*,[37] and with the assumed difference in style of the Cycle Epics.[38] The graphic style of Shanower's 'Heracles reminiscence' is a

34 Martin (2005); Finkelberg (2020) 169–181; but cf. Sammons (2013). Negative evaluation of Cycle Epic when compared to Homer goes back to Aristotle *Poetics* 1459a37–b17.

35 Grethlein (2012) describes 'heroic history' as a 'gravitational field' that links the past to the present through causality, thought tradition, and in exempla.

36 The deliberate shift of style also imitates the archaic and classical vase paintings' attempt to stereotype the narrative in visual representation (Tsagalis [2022]): vase paintings of the Eurytos-episode from the labors of Heracles are to such an extent stereotyped with regard to characters and the moment of action depicted, that they allow for the detailed reconstruction of the lost literary work that allegedly served as its inspiration.

37 Including 'embedded' taken as 'inserted at a later time', cf. the discussion of stylometric studies on *Iliad* 10 and their outcome in Hainsworth (1993) 154.

38 Griffin (1977) 52 'It is of course true that we have pitifully few of the thousands of verses which made up the Cycle, and that long epics are bound to contain weak passages. Yet we can form an impression of the treatment of Oedipus' curses, of the adorning of Aphrodite, and of the killing of Astyanax, all of which might reasonably be expected to be striking incidents and to exhibit the poets at their best. The result of our inspection perhaps casts some doubt on the optimistic view which some moderns have taken of these lost epics. When Rzach says both the *Thebais* and the *Cypria* contained "many poetic beauties", and Wilamowitz that the author of the *Iliou Persis* was "a creative poet of high rank" I suspect that in reality, while the opportunity for such beauties was certainly present, in the poems it was generally missed, and that they were very clearly inferior to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. After all, that was the verdict of antiquity.' More nuanced and prudent approaches to the style of Cycle epic poems in

Figure 3 'naïve style' in the Heracles-passage.

more comic rendering. We are reminded of the ironic depiction of, for example, Odysseus on Boeotian and Corinthian 'burlesque' pottery,[39] and of the out-

West (2013) and Tsagalis (2017; 2022). Fantuzzi & Tsagalis (2015) 405 'The aesthetics of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* represented something most probably unusual in the archaic age, with their detailed narrative pace, their selection of chronologically limited and unified time-spans, and their frequent deviations from the chronological order of events. In contrast to (what we now label) the 'Homeric' poems, the narrative strategies of the other poems in the Epic Cycle may have been the norm – strategies well suited to an audience's horizon of expectations at the time when the poems were first performed. In the pages that follow, I will try to investigate when and why the Epic Cycle could no longer satisfy the aesthetic expectations of both later readers and post-archaic literary critics. As we shall see, the Epic Cyclic poems turned into a practical (and indispensable) reference for Theban and Trojan mythology, and yet they seem to have been less and less read; above all, they came to function as a poetic foil against which the different mechanics of Homeric narrative were defined. Of course, the fact that the poems were condensed into epitomizing summaries – transformed into easy-to-swallow pills that were widely consulted from the Hellenistic age onwards – does not by itself prove that the 'originals' were no longer read. But the phenomenon does demonstrate that – differently from the summaries – the original poetic form of the Cyclic poems ended up being seen as dispensable, at least for many post-classical readers.'

39 E.g. Fairbanks, Vases (MFA), no. 467; British Museum 1893,0303.1; Metropolitan Museum 1971.11.1; Ashmolean Museum G 259; Ashmolean Museum G 249.

of-date description of out-of-date events by the aged king Nestor in the *Iliad* (*Il.*1.262–273, *Il.*7.133–160, *Il.*11.670–761, *Il.*23.629–645, *Od.*3.157–184). It has been argued recently in the scholarly debate that the works of the Epic Cycle, a collection of shorter and longer epic narratives, some ascribed to Homer, that may originate from the environment of the Homeric epic and were intended to fill the narrative gaps before, between, and following the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,*[40] allowed for a lighter, possibly more comic tone than the works of Homer.[41] As the Epic Cycle epics are only transmitted and known in very short fragments, it is hard to determine the truth of this claim; what becomes clear at any rate is that the cyclic poems worked from a shared knowledge of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* and opted for a different form of storytelling: one that depended more on telling than on showing, through, for example, featuring much less direct speech than the Homeric epic.[42]

With regard to performance practice, the graphic novel is capable of suggesting and evoking narrative tension in ways that archaic Greek epic storytelling could not. *Age of Bronze* features quite a lot of 'silence', scenes without spoken words or dialogue to suggest psychological stress:[43] facial expression and position within the dramatic scene are suggestive of a cascade of unexpressed thoughts and memories going around the head of the character depicted, much of which is left to the empathy of the reader.[44] (Fig. 4) In the Homeric epic, however, thoughts and emotions only exist due them being spoken out loud: there is

40 Cf. footnote 23 above.

41 Burgess (2001) 132–169.

42 Cf. Aristotle on the number of tragedy plots to be drawn from a single epic (*Poet.* 1459a37–b17). Burgess (2001) 12–33 discusses the possibility of the transmission of Cycle Epics' plots, but regards Photius' comment on Proclus (λέγει δὲ ὡς τοῦ ἐπικοῦ κύκλου τὰ ποιήματα διασῴζεται καὶ σπουδάζεται τοῖς πολλοῖς οὐχ οὕτω διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὡς διὰ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ πραγμάτων 'and he says that the poems of the Epic Cycle are preserved and of interest to most not for their worth but for the sequence of events in it' [transl. Burgess]) as indication for their transmission in verse.

43 Within Homeric epic, silence contributes to narrative tension as a signifier of feminine chastity (Fletcher [2008]).

44 An extensive example in the 23-page sample from Shanower *Age of Bronze: Sacrifice,* pp. 1–2, 18–19 on http://age-of-bronze.com/images/sac_sample.pdf. Kovacs (2016) comments on the way this fragment combines and contrast the taciturnity of the characters and the rising of the wind at Aulis.

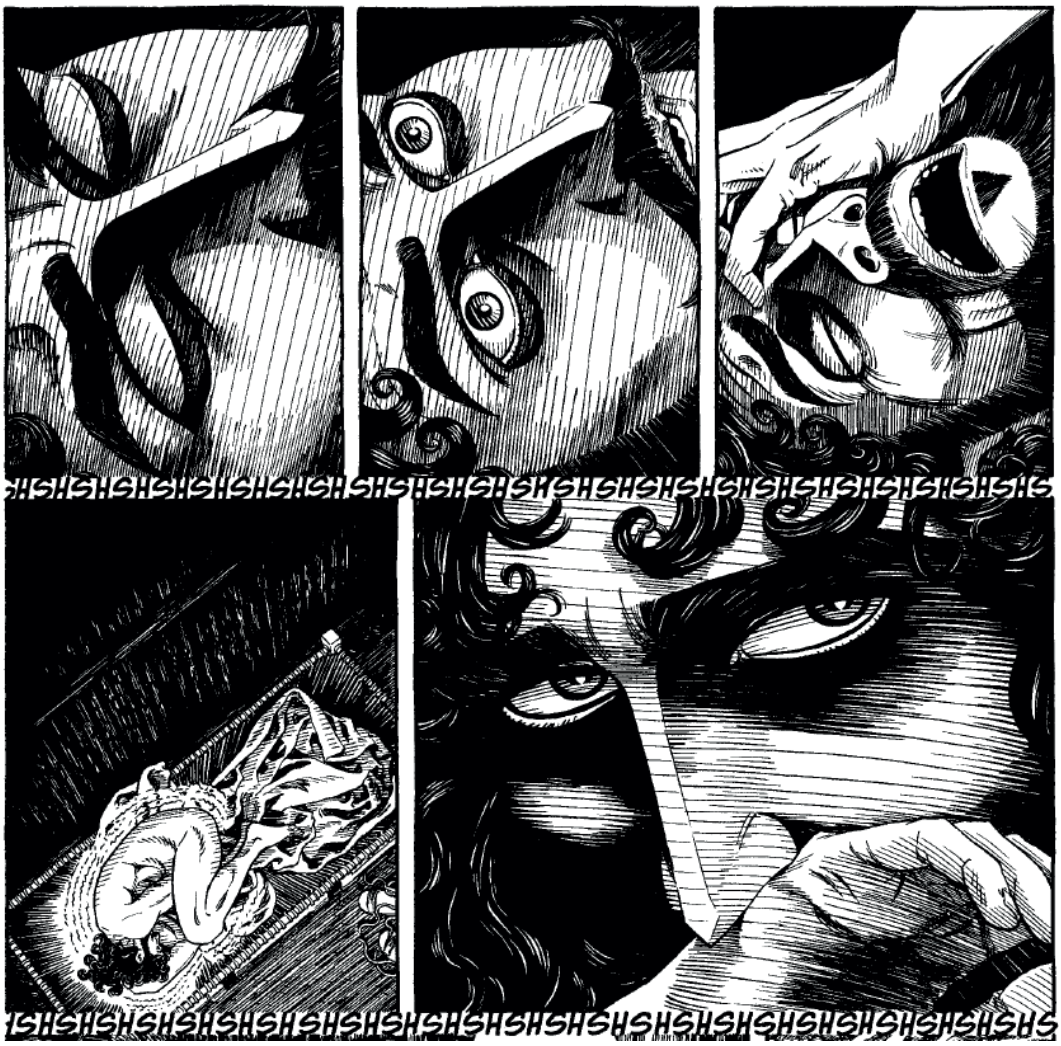

Figure 4 From *Age of Bronze: Sacrifice.*

no inner emotional life that goes unspoken.[45] The performer can only evoke emotion through performing, there is no room for tension from silence of waiting.[46]

Another important difference is the possibility within the graphic novel to shift scenes, and to show eventualities that occur simultaneously with others already depicted or yet to be shown. Homeric storytelling lacks this device:

45 De Jong (2018) 33–34.

46 Only for 'embedded focalization', cf. De Jong (2004) 14.

everything is told linearly without an explicit linking of possibly simultaneous events.[47] A famous example is formed by the gatherings of the gods in *Odyssey* books 1 and 5. So much has happened in between, in books 2 to 4, that it appears inconceivable that the gathering at the start of 5 is still the same as the one at the beginning of 1, though the story's internal logic demands as much.

The outcome of the novelization, however, result in a reception product that reflects an incomparably higher level of internal narrative logic than the Homeric epics or the cyclic poems displayed. The decision by the author of *Age of Bronze* to translate antiquity's patchwork of stories, fragments and testimonia into a single all-encompassing narrative thread does echo both ancient epics' tendency to 'contain', that is, to use the large epic frame to encompass and include as many single episodes as possible,[48] and novels' tendency to work against *medias in res.*[49] The latter principle defines ancient Greek epic storytelling, but is willfully traded in for chronological logic and episodic linearity, much like it

47 De Jong (2007) 30–31 'A specific Homeric device for handling time in connection with parallel storylines is what has become known as 'the law of Zielinski'. It consists of two parts. (1) The Homeric narrator does not retrace his steps: when he moves from one storyline to another, time ticks on and storyline B continues where storyline A left off; while one storyline is in the foreground, the other remain stationary, that is, time ticks on, but nothing important happens. (2) When two storylines are announced; for example, when a character issues two orders, their fulfillment is told successively, but they should in fact be thought of as occurring simultaneously; thus Zielinski reconstructs a real action, as opposed to the apparent action which we find in the text. […] Of course, should he so wish, the narrator is perfectly capable of presenting simultaneous actions, for example in *Odyssey* 8.438–448, where he explicitly notes that the little scene of Arete handing over a chest to Odysseus takes place while the water for his bath is getting warm. Then there is the technique, already mentioned by Zielinski, of rapid changes of scene, which create an impression of simultaneity. An example is found in *Odyssey* 17.492–606, where the narrator switches rapidly between Penelope's upper room and the *megaron,* where 'the beggar'/Odysseus, the suitors, and Telemachus find themselves. Finally, there is the most frequent and the most inconspicuous form of simultaneity, namely that conveyed by changes of scene via *men* … *de* or similar expressions: since the *men*-clause usually contains a verb in the imperfect, the suggestion is clearly that while we turn to another place or storyline, the action in the first place continues.'

48 Cf. Kovacs (2016).

49 Hudson (2010) argues for the more extensive narratological capacity of graphic novel as a reflection of its 'inherently dialogic' nature, cf. Dallacqua (2012) on the adaptation to reading strategies, and Mitchell (2014) on both comics and novel as a *medium* (as opposed to epic as a *genre*).

is found in the Greek and Roman mythographers, who were the first to line up both the epic format and the prose rendering as *media* for the presentation of mythological plots.[50]

Together with the decision to also include practically all the story material from the rich and long reception tradition of Homeric poetry, mythology, and mythography, *Age of Bronze,* 'a comprehensive retelling of the Trojan War legend, distilled from the many versions of the famous story and set against the archaeologically correct backdrop of the 13th century BCE' 'presents the complete story of the world-famous War at Troy' in a manner unknown in antiquity's epic: back then there was no 'complete story'. The concept of thematic continuity and linearity is found for the first time in late- and post-antique epitomizers who take care to provide thematic 'bridges' between the various episodes.[51] The desire to synthesize and chronologize now what explicitly resisted systematization then is equally found in other recent reception like *Troy* and *Fall of a City*.[52] It addresses a modern ideal that does not resonate with aesthetic concepts of antiquity.

Another form of idealization elicited by graphic novel *Age of Bronze* lies in the artistic representation of the Homeric world, a representation that is, as the citation 'set against the archaeologically correct backdrop of the 13th century BCE' on the website confirms, backed up by the results of archaeological and historical scholarship. The artist Eric Shanower took further trouble to base his reconstruction in drawing upon his own viewing of the remnants of, among other locations, Troy, modern-day Truva in Türkiye, and Mycenae on the Peloponnese. A large number of extant finds, reconstructions, and modern phantasies[53] were used for Shanower's reconstruction of the Homeric world. In scholars' view, however, such reconstruction on the basis of the Homeric epic is already a heavily contested issue:[54] Homer appears to have mixed a plethora

50 Smith & Trzaskoma (2022) 3–6; cf. Mitchel (2014).

51 Fantuzzi & Tsagalis (2015) 1–40, and cf. footnote 23 above.

52 Shahabudin (2007)

53 Considered self-evident in comics, cf. Hudson (2010) 35 'graphic novel constitutes a carnivalesque and Menippean form of writing due to its regular and free blending of mundane and fantastical imagery, "slum naturalism", and mythic symbolism'.

54 Kõiv (2022) 1 'The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* give an apparently coherent view of the Heroic world, providing rich evidence for many aspects of social life and human activity. This evi-

of different environments from different eras in his world view.[55] Shanower's depictions are based on detailed processing of contemporary visualization. On the one hand, he uses authentic artifacts, like the Cycladic idols and the famous boar tusk helmet. On the other, he leans on often fanciful reconstruction of, for example, layer 6A of historical Troy, the inner quarters of a Mycenaean palace as drawn by Piet de Jong of the palace of Nestor in Pylos, and on Evans' reconstruction of the Minoan palace of Knossos on Crete to suggest the walls of Troy. In instances of uncertain reconstruction, Shanower operates with care: he does not accept that Minoan and Mycenean female attire left breasts bare, nor does he dare to guess what type of heads (lions? lionesses? tigresses?) crowned the famous gate of Mycenae. (Fig. 5) Existing sword-and-sandal movies, however, and video games, are consulted to add to the reconstruction and vice versa.[56] Together the materials used enforce a new standard of the heroic world's representation, a standard that, like the systemization of the narrative, suggests a synthesis and internal coherence that cannot be found in the original stories.

What is kept in Shanower's 'complete story' is the nostalgic, modernizing idealization of the heroic world, and, with it, of the world of antiquity in general.[57] Almost everyone is physically intact and beautiful, almost everything is

---

dence is much richer than anything else we possess from before the Classical period, which makes it completely natural that it has regularly been used for reconstructing early Greek society. The way this evidence can be used is debatable. On the one hand, the epics did not purport to describe the present time of the poet, but rather a distant past which was supposed to be different from the present world. On the other hand, the world described must have been meaningful for the people listening to the poems, which suggests that the poet must have derived the evidence for this past world from the world familiar to himself and his public – thus presumably mainly from the realities of his present. In order to understand the value of the epics as a source for historical reconstruction, it would therefore be necessary to establish which was the present time of the poet, thus the time of the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and to what extent the world described in the poems could correspond to this specific historical period.'

55 Raaflaub (1998); Porter (2002) 65–71; Latacz (2004) 166–204, 283–285; Sherratt (2010); Prosperi (2016); Sherratt & Bennet (2017) viii–xvi.

56 *Total War Saga: Troy* (Creative Assembly Sofia/Sega 2020) is a good example of a video game influenced in its imagery by both the commonly accepted reconstruction of archaeological and historical items, and the reception of such imagery in visual representation like *Troy* (Wolfgang Petersen 2004) and *Troy: Fall of a City* (Owen Harris/BBC One/Netflix 2018).

57 Parker (2011) 148 (and n. 5) 'An approach [of the concept of popular culture] with an eye to antiquity might prove fruitful, since Greece and Rome have played an important role in

Figure 5 From *Age of Bronze: Sacrifice.*

well wrought and impressive. Far away is the real world, in which human beings suffer from bad food, bad health, and bad hygiene, building ever poorer dwellings upon the remnants of previous generations – the real world where the heroic is the exception instead of the standard. The heroic world acknowledges this level of 'reality',[58] but its idealizing impulse has a normative influence on

---

the idea of "popular culture" ever since the term was first coined by Herder [...]. The ancients most often furnished scholars with dreams of a unified, organic *Gemeinschaft* predating the divisions of the Industrial Revolution. So, for example, Marx on Greek art and epic in *Grundrisse*'.

58 Raaflaub (2011) 624 'With the modern distinction between myth and history the historicity of Homeric society has become an important problem. If this society corresponds mostly not to poetic fiction but to historical reality and can be dated plausibly, historians gain a valuable literary source to illuminate a period for which they would otherwise have to rely on archaeology. Several scholars have used a commonsense approach and assumed that the poet would naturally model epic society on that of his own time. Others accept this only for part of the picture; they focus on real or perceived inconsistencies, treating the supposed "amal-

the details of what counts as the full 'canvas of human experience' in reception through graphic novelization: the toil of premodern daily life seems not even to be carried by the non-privileged and marginalized. What further transfers the *Age of Bronze* Trojan-War narrative to the 21st century is the synthesis of emotions and passions: characters act larger than life, even in this respect that is so scarcely elaborated upon by the ancient author. Graphic novel proves to be an excellent medium in order to add this layer of reconstruction and expression; a layer that is equally referred to when authors active in the recent trend of mythology-retelling from a feminine perspective motivate their choice of topic and characterization as 'making marginalized voices heard'.[59] Modernity seems to require full absence of the gods to compensate for the newly added layer.[60]

FANTASIZING EPIC

It is no wonder then that Shanower sometimes 'over-reconstructs' in his attempt to synthesize. His accuracy in rendering architecture, Homeric materiality, and the 'archaeologically correct backdrop' results in a narratological and visual coherence that overemphasizes and exaggerates the extent to which the observations concerning storytelling and the findings concerning Homeric realia and the Heroic world are generically applicable to the representation of epic beyond the restrictive focus of the heroic. The choice to fill in details of material environment, narrative sequentiality, and psychologically motivated human behavior on the basis of what the study of Homer and the context of his epic poems has yielded creates a version of epic 'totality' that is not only informed by scholarly reconstruction, but also itself informs future endeavors, both scholarly and non-scholarly, to reconstruct and represent antiquity. In the case of epic such cross-informing has already become apparent in, for example, the way

gamation" of heterogeneous elements as an insurmountable obstacle to the historicity of this society, which they consequently see as an artificial product of poetic tradition and imagination.' Ondine Pache, Dué, Lupack & Lamberton (2020) 257–255, 278–286.

59 Nathalie Haynes in a 2019 interview on her novel *A Thousand Ships* in The Guardian.

60 Cf. Shahabudin (2007) 108 on 'how cinematic narrative lets features of myth appear natural and how extra-cinematic factors encourage viewers to accept such a construction' in the film *Troy*.

characters, costumes, and even facial features of Greek and Trojan heroes have become standardized in the influencing of video games like *Total War Saga: Troy* through a film like *Troy* (2004).

A particularly telling instance of Shanower's over-reconstructing, built from the desire to synthesize at all different levels (and a personal favorite), is what happens when Agamemnon, forced by reluctant seers and angered gods, and under the pressure of the entire army, is forced to repent an insult to the divine by sacrificing his daughter Iphigeneia, a scene that is at the heart of many modern Troy-receptions.[61] Without this sacrifice, the Greek army will never successfully sail from Greece to Troy. Agamemnon lures his daughter to the Greek army camp with the promise, transmitted through a messenger, of a last-minute marriage to Achilles, the greatest hero on the Greek side. The messenger having left, however, Agamemnon grieves his decision and secretly orders a scribe to write down a new message, telling Iphigeneia and her mother that the wedding is off, and that there is no need to come to the camp. But the second messenger is intercepted and his writings are smashed on the floor by an angry Menelaus, shocked by the secret and egoistic – though for us, understandable – change of mind by his brother. (Fig. 6) The writings are clearly clay tablets; the same

61 To the shock and horror of viewers of *Troy: Fall of a City:* Helen Daly (*Express* 25 February 2018) writes 'Troy: Fall Of A City viewers in horror over extremely brutal sacrifice scene 'B****y hell! TROY: FALL OF A CITY viewers were in complete horror after it aired an extremely violent sacrifice scene on the BBC One show yesterday. The BBC's second instalment of the Greek mythology adaptation was incredibly brutal. Poor Iphigenia (played by Lauren Coe) was introduced this evening and for all intents and purposes, planned to get married in order to please the gods. However, Agamemnon (Johnny Harris) offended the goddess Artemis (Thando Bulane-Hopa) who in turn demanded that he sacrificed his daughter to allow for a safe passage to Troy. Naturally, it was a tragic affair, as Agamemnon took Iphigenia to the top of a mountain with a fiery pit in order to send her soul to the goddess. It seemed that everyone but the naive beauty and her mother, Clytemnestra (Emily Child), knew what was going on – and it made for difficult viewing. After begging to follow Iphigenia to her wedding, an aide held her back before she could stop the sacrifice. She was told: "The gods, they didn't demand Iphigenia's marriage." Clytemnestra seemed confused initially, but when the realisation hit, her horror was palpable. Back on the mountain, Agamemnon was completely horrified as he toiled with the fact he was about to kill his daughter. "The wind blows hard against us, the goddess gave me no choice," he reasoned. But Iphigenia insisted that she was his flesh and blood – but it didn't save her life. "If it is to happen, let it be without struggle… Do it," she begged, before Agamemnon slit her throat. The brutal scene was interspersed with shots of Helen (Bella Dayne) and Paris (Louis Hunter) having passionate sex. Viewers were completely horrified by the sacrifice and flocked to Twitter to discuss it.'

Figure 6 From *Age of Bronze: Sacrifice.*

clay tablets that have been dug up by the thousands, written and used in the Mycenean palaces by a select guild of scribes to record the year's produce, trade, and goods' distribution. Clay tablets serve only administration and registration, and only for those working in the trade, without exception.[62] To the frustration of scholars no trace of correspondence, either within the trade or within a wider community of users (like *wanakes* and other officials), let alone *literature* was ever entrusted to writing – Myceneans seemed to have not even considered the possibility! In the heroic world of Homeric epic, writing, or perhaps better 'engraving', is limited to a single instance: the 'horrible signs', 'written on a wooden tablet' (σήματα λυγρά γράψας ἐν πίνακι *Il.*6.168b–169a) and delivered by an unknowing Bellerophon to seal his own doom. Shanower's fantasy of a Homeric king using the services of a scribe to deliver a word of warning in Linear B on a clay tablet, only to be frustrated by another Homeric king and interpreted as an indication of widely understandable betrayal, serves as a clear

62 Finlayson (2013).

example of the extent to which the application of the data available ticks all too many wished-for boxes.[63]

It is thus also with a slight sense of regret that the conclusion must be that the series' attempt 'to be true to all traditions' does cater 'those who think visually', but envisions, I argue, a fantasy rather than 'Troy sprung to life'.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adriaensens (2017) – Vito Adriaensens, Of Swords, Sandals, and Statues: The Myth of the Living Statue, in: Steven Jacobs, Susan Felleman, Vito Adriaensens & Lisa Colpaert (eds), *Screening Statues. Sculpture in Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2017) pp. 137–155. https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8530224.

Bakogianni & Unceta Gómez (2024) – Anastasia Bakogianni & Luis Unceta Gómez (eds), *Classical Reception: New Challenges in a Changing World* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2024) (*Trends in Classics – Pathways of Reception, Volume* 9).

Beigel (2013) – Thorsten Beigel, With Your Shield or on It: The Gender of Heroism in Zack Snyder's *300* and Rudolph Maté's *The 300 Spartans,* in: Almut-Barbara Renger & Jon Solomon (eds.), *Ancient World in Film and Television. Gender and Politics* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2013) pp. 65–78.

Bird (2010) – Graeme D. Bird, *Multitextuality in the Homeric* Iliad: *The Witness of the Ptolemaic Papyri, in: Hellenistic Studies Series 43* (Washington, DC: Harvard University, Center for Hellenistic Studies 2010).

Brügger (2017) – Claude Brügger, *Homer's* Iliad: *The Basel Commentary Book XXIV,* translated by Benjamin W. Millis and Sara Strack, edited by S. Douglas Olson (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2017).

Budelmann & Haubold (2008) – Felix Budelmann & Johannes Haubold, Reception and Tradition, in: Lorna Hardwick & Christophes Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell 2008) pp. 13–25.

63 An interesting parallel with reference to the auditory rather than the visual aspect in Van Elferen (2013).

Burgess (2001) – Jonathan S. Burgess, *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2001).

Burgess (2004) – Jonathan S. Burgess, Performance and the Epic Cycle, in: *The Classical Journal* 100.1 (2004) pp. 1–23. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4133003.

Calame (2022) – Claude Calame, Mythographer and Mythography: Indigenous Categories? Greek Inquiries into the Heroic Past, in: R. Scott Smith & Stephen M. Trzaskoma (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography* (New York: Oxford University Press 2022) pp. 458–473.

Cornelius (2011) – Michael G. Cornelius (ed.), *Of Muscles and Men: Essays on the Sword and Sandal Film* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co. 2011).

Couch (2000) – Chris Couch, The Publication and Formats of Comics, Graphic Novels, and Tankobon, in: *Image & Narrative 1* (2000). https://web.archive.org/web/20051015025242/http://www.imageandnarrative.be/narratology/chriscouch.htm (last accessed 21 Februari 2024).

Dallacqua (2012) – Ashley K. Dallacqua, Exploring Literary Devices in Graphic Novels, in: *Language Arts* 89.6 (2012), pp. 365–378.

Davis (2008) – Gregson Davis, Reframing the Homeric: Images of the *Odyssey* in the Art of Derek Walcott and Romare Bearden, in: Lorna Hardwick & Christophes Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford: Blackwell 2008) 404–414.

De Jong (2004) – Irene de Jong, Homer, in: Irene de Jong, René Nünlist & Angus Bowie (eds), *Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative in Ancient Greek Literature* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2004) pp. 13–24 (= *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, vol. 1*).

De Jong (2018) – Irene de Jong, Homer, in: Koen de Temmerman & Evert van Emde Boas (eds), *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2018) (= *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, vol. 4*).

De Pourcq, De Haan & Rijser (2020) – Maarten de Pourcq, Nathalie de Haan & David Rijser (eds), *Framing classical reception studies: different perspectives on a developing field* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2020) (= *Metaforms: studies in the reception of classical antiquity, volume* 19).

Dumont (2009) – Hervé Dumont, *L'Antiquité au cinéma. Vérités, légendes et manipulations* (Paris: Nouveau Monde Editions/Lausanne: Cinémathèque suisse 2009).

Etter, Lukas, Nehrlich, Thomas & Nowotny, Joanna (eds.). *Reader Superhelden: Theorie – Geschichte – Medien* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag 2018).

Fantuzzi & Tsagalis (2015) – Marco Fantuzzi & Christos Tsagalis (eds), *The Greek Epic Cycle and its Ancient Reception: A Companion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015).

Finkelberg (2020) – Margalit Finkelberg, *Homer and Early Greek Epic* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2020).

Finlayson (2013) – Sarah Finlayson, Form Follows Function: Writing and its Supports in the Aegean Bronze Age, in: Kathryn E. Piquette & Ruth D. Whitehouse (eds), *Writing as Material Practice: Substance, Surface and Medium* (London: Ubiquity Press 2013) pp. 123–142. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bai.g.

Fletcher (2008) – Judith Fletcher, Women's Space and Wingless Words in the *Odyssey*, in: *Phoenix* 62.1/2 (2008) pp. 77–91. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25651698.

Ford (1992) – Andrew Ford, *Homer: The Poetry of the Past* (Ithaca NY: Cornel University Press 1992). https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvn5tx73.

Graziosi (2002) – Barbara Graziosi, *Inventing Homer. The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).

Graziosi (2008) – Barbara Graziosi, The Ancient Reception of Homer, in: Lorna Hardwick & Christophes Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2008) pp. 26–37.

Greenwood (2016) – Emily Greenwood, The Cultural Mobility of Classics, in: *Daedalus* 145.2 (2016) pp. 41–49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00374.

Grethlein (2012) – Jonas Grethlein, Homer and Heroic History, in: John Marincola, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones & Calum Maciver (eds), Greek Notions of the Past in the Archaic and Classical Eras: History without Historians, in: *Edinburgh Leventis Studies 6* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2012) pp. 14–36.

Griffin (1977) – Jasper Griffin, The Epic Cycle and the Uniqueness of Homer, in: *The Journal for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies* 97 (1977) pp. 39–53. https://www.jstor.org/stable/i225848. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/631020.

Günsberg (2005) – Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema. Gender and Genre* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2005). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230510463.

Hainsworth (1993) – Bryan Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary Volume III: books 9–12* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511518386.

Haynes (2020) – Nathalie Haynes, *Pandora's Jar: Women in the Greek Myths* (London: Picador 2020).

Hardwick (2003) – Lorna Hardwick, Reception studies, in: *New Surveys in the Classics* 33 (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003).

Hopkins (2008) – David Hopkins, Colonization, Closure or Creative Dialogue? The Case of Pope's *Iliad,* in: Lorna Hardwick & Christophes Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell 2008) pp. 129–140.

Hudson (2010) – Rick Hudson, The Derelict Fairground: A Bakhtinian Analysis of the Graphic Novel Medium, in: *The College English Association (CEA) Critic* 72.3 (2010) pp. 35–49. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44378423.

Hunter (2018) – Richard Hunter, *The Measure of Homer: The Ancient Reception of the* Iliad *and the* Odyssey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108604277.

Hutcheon & O'Flynn (2013) – Linda Hutcheon & Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York/London: Routledge 2013[2]).

Jha (2016) – Varsha Jha, The Mytho-epic Re-imagination, in: *Indian Literature* 60.6 (2016) pp. 183–193.

Kallendorf (2017) – Craig Kallendorf, Foreword, in: Jeffrey Hunt, R. Alden Smith & Fabio Stok (eds.), *Classics From Papyrus to the Internet: An Introduction to Transmission and Reception* (Austin, TX 2017) pp. 1–4.

Kelly (2007) – Adrian Kelly, How to End an Orally-Derived Epic Poem, in: *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 137.2 (2007) pp. 371–402. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/apa.2008.0012.

Kinnard & Crnkovich (2017) – Roy Kinnard & Tony Crnkovich, *Italian Sword and Sandal Films, 1908–1990* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co Inc 2017).

Kõiv (2022) – Mait Kõiv, Homer and the 'Heroic World': the Use of Epics as a Source for Early Greek Society, in: *Tuna* 1 (2022). https://tuna.ra.ee/en/2022-2/tuna-1-2022/ (last accessed 28 Februari 2024).

Konstantinos (2013) – Nikoloutsos Konstantinos (ed.), Ancient Greek Women in Film, in: *Classical Presences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093//9780199678921.001.0001

Kovacs (2011) – George Kovacs, Comics and Classics: Establishing a Critical Frame, in: George Kovacs & C. W. Marshall (eds), *Classics and Comics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011) pp. 3–24.

Kovacs (2016) – George Kovacs, Mythic Totality in *Age of Bronze,* in: George Kovacs & C. W. Marshall (eds), *Son of Classics and Comics* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016) pp. 33–45.

Landfester & Hinz (2015) – Manfred Landfester & Berthold Hinz, Reception of Antiquity, in: Friedrich Jaeger (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Modern History Online, Vol.* 1. (Leiden: Brill 2015). https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-early-modern-history-online/antiquity-reception-of-COM_016911#COM-16912 (last accessed 14 February 2024). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/2352-0272/016911.

Latacz (2004) – Joachim Latacz, *Troy and Homer. Towards a Solution of an Old Mystery,* translated from the German by Kevin Windle & Rosh Ireland (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004). https://archive.org/details/troyhomertowardsoooolata/page/n5/mode/2up.

Lauwers, Dhont & Huybrecht (2013) – Jeroen Lauwers, Marieke Dhont & Xanne Huybrecht, "This is Sparta!": Discourse, Gender, and the Orient in Zack Snyder's *300,* in: Almut-Barbara Renger and Jon Solomon (eds.), *Ancient Worlds in Film and Television: Gender and Politics* (Leiden: Brill 2013) pp. 79–94. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjx062.7.

Ling (2018) – Thomas Ling, No, the BBC is not 'blackwashing' Troy: Fall of a City: Why has the casting of David Gyasi and Hakeem Kae-Kazim as Achilles and Zeus proved so controversial?, in: *RadioTimes* (24 February 2019) https://www.radiotimes.com/tv/drama/troy-fall-of-a-city-black washing-casting-black-actors-greek-myth/ (last accessed 21 February 2024).

Lowe & Shahabudin (2009) – Dunstan Lowe & Kim Shahabudin (eds), *Classics for All. Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009).

Lozano Gómez, Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas & Alarcón Hernández (2019) – Fernando Lozano Gómez, Alfonso Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas & Carmen Alarcón Hernández (eds.), *The Present of Antiquity: Reception, Recovery, Reinvention of the Ancient World in Current Popular Culture* (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté 2019) (= *Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité (ISTA), n°*1476).

Manolea (2022) – Christina-Panagiota Manolea (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Homer from the Hellenistic Age to Late Antiquity* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2022) (= *Brill's Companions to Classical Reception, Volume* 22).

Martin (2005) – Richard Martin, Pulp Epic: The *Catalogue* and the *Shield,* in: Richard Hunter (ed.), *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women. Constructions and Reconstructions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005) pp. 153–175.

Martindale (2006). – Charles Martindale, Introduction: Thinking Through Reception, in: Charles Martindale & Richard F. Thomas (eds.), *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2006) pp. 1–13.

Mitchel (2014) – William John Thomas Mitchell, Comics as Media: Afterword, in: *Critical Enquiry* 40.3 (2014), pp. 255–265. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/677376.

Myrsiades (2008) – Kostas Myrsiades, Introduction: Homer; Analysis and Influence', in: *College Literature* 35.4 (2008) pp. xi–xix.

Nagy (1996) – Gregory Nagy, *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996). https://chs.harvard.edu/book/nagy-gregory-poetry-as-performance-homer-and-beyond.

Nagy (2004) – Gregory Nagy, *Homer's Text and Language* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press Urbana and Chicago 2004). DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/27693994.

Nicholas (2018) – Diak Nicholas (ed.), *The New Peplum: Essays on Sword and Sandal Films and Television Programs Since the 1990s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2018).

Nisbet (2020) – Gideon Nisbet, Modern Popular Culture, in: Tim Whitmarsh (ed.), *Oxford Classical Dictionary Online.* (06 July 2015). https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.7003 (last accessed 14 February 2024).

O'Brien (2014) – Daniel O'Brien, *Classical Masculinity and the Spectacular Body on Film: The Mighty Sons of Hercules* (London: Palgrave Macmillan2014). https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137384713.

Ondine Pache, Dué, Lupack & Lamberton (2020) – Corinne Ondine Pache, Casey Dué, Susan Lupack & Robert Lamberton, *The Cambridge Guide to Homer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020). https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139225649.

Parker (2011) – Holt N. Parker, Towards a Definition of Popular Culture, in: *History and Theory* 50.2 (2011) pp. 147–170. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2011.00574.x.

Pomeroy (2008) – Arthur J. Pomeroy, *'Then it Was Destroyed by the Volcano': The Ancient World in Film and on Television* (London: Druckworth 2008). DOI: https://doi.org/10.3815/007543509789745430.

Porter (2002) – James I. Porter, Homer: The Very Idea, in: *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 10.2 (2002), pp. 57–86.

Prosperi (2016) – Valentina Prosperi, The Trojan War: Between Myth and History, in: Edmund P. Cueva & Francisco Javier Martínez García (eds), *Splendide Mendax: Rethinking Fakes and Forgeries in Classical, Late Antique, and Early Christian Literature* (Groningen: Barkhuis 2016) pp. 93–112.

Quiroga Puertas & Olabarria (2024) – Alberto Jesús Quiroga Puertas & Leire Olabarria (eds.), *The Ancient World in Alternative History and Counterfactual Fictions* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing 2024).

Raaflaub (1998) – Kurt A. Raaflaub, Homer, The Trojan War, and History, in: *The Classical World* 91.5 (1998) pp. 386–403. https://doi.org/10.2307/4352106.

Raaflaub (2011) – Kurt A. Raaflaub, Homeric Society, in: Ian Morris & Barry B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2011²) pp. 624–648.

Renger & Solomon (2012) – Almut-Barbara Renger & Jon Solomon (eds.), *Ancients Worlds in Film and Television. Gender and Politics* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2012) (= *Metaforms: studies in the reception of classical antiquity, volume* 1).

Richardson (1993) – Nicholas James Richardson, *The Iliad: A Commentary Volume VI: books 21–24* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993).

Roisman (2008) – Hanna M. Roisman, The *Odyssey* from Homer to NBC: The Cyclops and the Gods, in: Lorna Hardwick & Christophes Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell 2008) pp. 315–326.

Rollinger (2020) – Christian Rollinger, *Classical Antiquity in Video Games* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2020) (= *Imagines – Classical Receptions in the Visual and Performing Arts*).

Ross (2004) – Shawn A. Ross, *Barbarophonos:* Language and Panhellenism in the *Iliad,* in: *Classical Philology* 100.4 (2005) pp. 299–316. https://doi.org/10.1086/500434.

Russo, Fernandez-Galiano & Heubeck (1992) – Joseph Russo, Manuel Fernández-Galiano & Alfred Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's* Odyssey (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992).

Sammons (2013) – Benjamin Sammons, Narrative Doublets in the Epic Cycle, in: *The American Journal of Philology* 134.4 (2013) pp. 529–556. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2013.0043.

Schein (2008) – Seth L. Schein, 'Our Debt to Greece and Rome', in: Lorna Hardwick & Christophes Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2008) pp. 75–85.

Schelly (2010) – Bill Schelly, *Founders of Comic Fandom: Profiles of 90 Publishers, Dealers, Collectors, Writers, Artists and Other Luminaries of the 1950s and 1960s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. 2010).

Shahabudin (2007) – Kim Shahabudin, From Greek Myth to Hollywood Story: Explanatory Narrative in *Troy,* in: Martin M. Winkler (ed.), *Troy. From Homer's* Iliad *to Hollywood Epic* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2007) pp. 107–118.

Sherratt (2010) – Susan Sherratt, The Trojan War: History or Bricolage?, in: *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 53.2 (2010) pp. 1–18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-5370.2010.00007.x.

Sherratt & Bennet (2017) – Susan Sherratt & John Bennet (eds.), *Archaeology and the Homeric Epic* (Oxford: Oxbow Books 2017).

Simms (2018) – Robert C. Simms (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Prequels, Sequels, and Retellings of Classical Epic* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2018) (= *Brill's Companions to Classical Reception, Volume* 15).

Simões Rodrigues (2021) – Nuno Simões Rodrigues, Mitología griega en el cine, in: Marta González González & Lucía Romero Mariscal (eds.), *Claves para la lectura del mito griego* (Madrid: Dykinson Libros 2021) pp. 407–444.

Smith & Trzaskoma (2022) – R. Scott Smith & Stephen M. Trzaskoma (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2022).

Sulprizio (2011) – Chiara Sulprizio, *Eros* conquers All: Sex and Love in Eric Shanower's *Age of Bronze,* in: George Kovacs & C. W. Marshall (eds.), *Classics and Comics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011) pp. 207–220.

Tatum (2014) – James Tatum, A real Short Introduction to Classical Reception Theory, in: *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 22.2 (2014) pp. 75–96. https://doi.org/10.2307/arion.22.2.0075.

Tomasso (2016) – Vincent Tomasso, Rhapsodic Receptions of Homer in Multiform Proems of the *Iliad,* in: *The American Journal of Philology* 137.3 (2016) pp. 377–409. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26360880.

Tsagalis (2017) – Christos Tsagalis, *Early Greek Epic Fragment I: Antiquarian and Genealogical Epic* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2017). https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110532876.

Tsagalis (2022) – Christos Tsagalis, *Early Greek Epic Fragment II: Epics on Herakles: Kreophylos and Peisandros* (Berin/Boston: De Gruyter 2022). https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110767605.

Van Elferen (2013) – Isabella van Elferen, Fantasy Music: Epic Soundtracks, Magical Instruments, Musical Metaphysics, in: *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 24.1 (2013) pp. 4–24.

West (2013) – Martin L. West, *The Epic Cycle: A Commentary on the Lost Troy Epics* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013).

Wheeler (2002) – Graham Wheeler, Sing, Muse …: The Introit from Homer to Apollonius, in: *The Classical Quarterly* 52.1 (2002) pp. 33–49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/cq/52.1.33.

Winkler (2007) – Martin M. Winkler, *Troy: From Homer's* Iliad *to Hollywood Epic* (Malden, MA: Blackwell 2007).

Ronald Blankenborg
Radboud University Nijmegen
Erasmusplein 1
6525 HT Nijmegen
ronald.blankenborg@ru.nl

Suggested citation
Blankenborg, Ronald: 'The Wide Canvas of Human Drama'. Fantasizing Antiquity Through Graphic Novel. In: thersites 19 (2024): Fantastic antiquities and where to find them. Ancient worlds in (post-)modern novels, pp. 380–409.
https://doi.org/10.34679/thersites.vol19.282