

CRITICAL

MARCH—
JUNE 2023

ANTIQUITIES

WORKSHOP

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NETWORK



The seminars will be held online on Zoom. All are welcome. For more information on the Critical Antiquities Network please email fass.can@sydney.edu.au. To register, please **sign up** for the Critical Antiquities Network mailing list and you will receive CAN announcements and Zoom links.

March
29/30

Staging the Agon: Sophocles, Gorgias, and the Theatricality of Politics

Valentina Moro
(University of Verona/DePaul University)

Wed, March 29: 16:30-18:00 (Chicago)
Wed, March 30: 09:30-11:00 (Sydney)

If, on the one hand, theatricality is key to understand the “political” in ancient Greece, on the other hand tragic language has a distinctive political connotation. It emerges in a crucial way in Sophocles’ tragedies if we consider the agonistic construction of the exchanges between his characters and the relation between each character and the political community. In order to explain my definition of tragic agonism – which is the focus of a monograph I am currently writing – in the first part of the paper I refer to Nicole Loraux’s crucial intuition that the agon has to be considered the foundation of the “political” in the polis, insofar as it framed the relations and the tensions between its inhabitants (e.g. citizens/non-citizens; wealthy/poor people; men/women) while protecting the city from stasis. In the second part of the paper, I demonstrate how tragic agonism is a pivotal conceptual framework to read Sophocles’ *Antigone* by examining two forms of speech, both of which have a ritual structure: the first one is agon logon and the second one is lamentation. Ultimately, I highlight the role played by the gender parameter in framing agonistic relationships in Sophocles’ theatre.

April 26/27

Geopower, Blackness, and the Pandemic: Reading Antigone with DuBois and Hartman

Mario Telò
(UC Berkeley)

Wed, April 26: 16:30-18:00 (California)
Thurs, April 27: 09:30-11:00 (Sydney)

Seizing on the anachronism inherent in every act of reading while refusing the dichotomy between ancient text and modern reception, this paper shows how Greek tragedy can speak to us about the pandemic as well as the crises it has aggravated and come to epitomize. Re-reading *Antigone* in light of Saidiya Hartman’s *Litany for Grieving Sisters* and W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Comet* helps us conceptualize the relationship between tragedy and the end of the world, or the end of the human, a prospect that the pandemic and climate change have made palpable. More importantly, this affective and interpretive re-engagement with Sophocles’ play might allow us to locate imaginative forms of being beyond extraction and beyond human extinction.

May 31/
June 1

Book Launch: Sarah Derbew, *Untangling Blackness in Greek Antiquity*

Discussants:

Alastair Blanshard
(University of Queensland)

Nicole Spigner
(Northwestern University)

Wed, May 31: 16:30-18:00 (California)

Thurs, June 1: 09:30-11:00 (Sydney)

How should articulations of blackness from the fifth century BCE to the twenty-first century be properly read and interpreted? This important and timely new book is the first concerted treatment of black skin color in the Greek literature and visual culture of antiquity. In charting representations in the Hellenic world of black Egyptians, Aithiopians, Indians, and Greeks, Sarah Derbew dexterously disentangles the complex and varied ways in which blackness has been co-produced by ancient authors and artists; their readers, audiences, and viewers; and contemporary scholars. Exploring the precarious hold that race has on skin coloration, the author uncovers the many silences, suppressions, and misappropriations of blackness within modern studies of Greek antiquity. Shaped by performance studies and critical race theory alike, her book maps out an authoritative archaeology of blackness that reappraises its significance. It offers a committedly anti-racist approach to depictions of black people while rejecting simplistic conflation or explanations.

June 21/22

Major Corrections: the Materialist Philology of Sebastiano Timpanaro

Tom Geue
(Australian National University)

Wed, June 21: 19:30-21:00 (New York)

Thurs, June 22: 09:30-11:00 (Sydney)

Sebastiano Timpanaro (1923-2000) was one of the tightest and brightest thinkers of the 20th century. Trained as a classical philologist in the most German sense of the word, Timpanaro also maintained an unwavering, antagonistic, and near life-long commitment to the realisation of socialism. But his intellectual contributions go well beyond one or the other sphere of philology or politics: studies on 19th century European cultural history, Freudian psychoanalysis, the evolution of linguistics, the history of classical scholarship, and 19th century Italian literature rolled off Timpanaro's typewriter to make him a rare and genuine example of the thing we always say we want to be, interdisciplinary. While Timpanaro himself maintained a strict separation between his philological pursuits and 'the rest', self-effacingly side-lining his classical activity as narrow and dry, this talk will read against the grain to trace the ongoing value of philology to Timpanaro's varied intellectual output. We will hopefully see how philology as toolkit and worldview can sometimes be used for good rather than evil, serving in exceptional cases not necessarily as a vehicle for oppression, but as a technique for propelling justice, equality, and struggle.