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Co-founder & Co-Editor-in-Chief

Sophie is a high school senior in Massachusetts. Her research interests span ancient Mediterranean and Chinese history, with a particular focus on cross-cultural encounters, identity, and the transmission of ideas across civilizations. She has conducted independent research in ancient history and late antique literature and presented her work at international academic conferences. Through Aurea Chronica, Sophie hopes to build a global community where young scholars can share research, engage across traditions, and discover new ways of approaching the ancient world.



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Jenna Liang is a senior at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. Born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, she has been exploring the Classical world since middle school, crediting the Percy Jackson and Goddess Girls series with sparking her enduring love of Greek and Roman mythology. A playwright and satirist, Jenna delights in giving Hellenistic myths her own contemporary twist, reframing ancient tropes and archetypes through a modern lens. At Aurea Chronica, she brings this creative perspective to the study and presentation of the ancient world, helping create space for both scholarly inquiry and imaginative engagement with the Classics.



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A junior living in Massachusetts. As an art-lover, she is interested in how art has transformed humanity and its influence on history and culture. Her role as design director for Aurea Chronica helped deepen her understanding about art portrayal in classics.

Dear Readers

It is with immense pleasure and pride that we welcome you to the fourth issue of Aurea Chronica. Since our inaugural publication two years ago, our journey has been one of intellectual discovery and growth. This issue marks a milestone as we delve into our most innovative theme yet: Classics' connection, application, and reception in the contemporary world.

We are thrilled to introduce new categories to this issue, including satire and media (reviews of film and music), even featuring an online video game. These additions broaden our horizons while we are looking to the past and reflecting on the present; they encapsulate how the Classical world is a breathing influence on modernity.

The creation of this issue has been an enjoyable journey on its own. We were met with a volume of submissions larger than usual, and we thus went through a selection process to curate the most compelling pieces. We want to express our gratitude to all the submitters for trusting us with your work, and to our dedicated editorial team for bringing this project to fruition in just a little over one month. Your commitment and creativity have been the driving forces behind this journal.

Now, please enjoy the diverse and dynamic perspectives within the pages of this issue. Vetera novis augere.

Aurea Chronica Journal
Sophie Chen and Jenna Liang
Editors in Chief

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ACADEMIC ESSAYS AND PAPERS



AMANDA MAO

MANAGING EDITOR – ACADEMIC PAPERS

I'm Amanda Mao and I'm a junior attending Dana Hall School in Massachusetts. I'm interested in various topics such as Classical literature, Classical reception, gender studies and sociology. Currently, I'm working on a project about the reception of the Classics during the Suffrage movement in the United States.

Pharmaka and Patriarchy: Feminism in the Classical World

Levan Chang

In Greco-Roman mythology, female magical figures occupy a space of deep cultural ambivalence. Often feared as symbols of feminist transgression, they were also revered as vital narrative agents. Among the most enduring are Medea and Circe, whose portrayals combine immense supernatural power with social marginality. Their literary depictions reflect real anxieties about gender, authority, and acceptable knowledge. As these characters moved from Greek to Roman traditions, their representations hardened from morally ambiguous figures into didactic archetypes, revealing the shifting pressures of patriarchal control.

The Evolution of Medea

Medea's primary canonical entry is found in Euripides' *Medea* (431 BCE). Focusing on psychological realism, Euripides gives voice to a marginalized figure who does not belong to the societal majority. Initially a "helper-maiden" who assists Jason through her knowledge of *pharmaka* (potions, poisons, and magical spells), Medea is transformed by Euripides into an autonomous protagonist. When Jason betrays her, she orchestrates a calculated revenge culminating in filicide. This act positions her as the ultimate anti-type of the ideal Greek woman, whose role was strictly tied to the reproduction in the *oikos* (household). Her internal conflict is captured during her internal monologue:

> "I have been told the evils I must do. My passion's stronger than my resolution" (Euripides, *Medea*, Lines 1078-1080).

This debate demonstrates Euripides' construction of Medea as a figure of rational, self-aware transgression rather than mindless mania. Her transgression is further nuanced by her

intersectional identity as both a foreigner and a woman, placing her entirely outside the legal protections of Athenian citizenship. In fifth-century Athens, where women were excluded from politics and confined to the home, Medea's autonomy was deeply threatening. By murdering her sons, asserting agency, and escaping in the Sun god's chariot, she forms an archetype of the woman whose knowledge operates outside patriarchal and state control.

Roman authors later inherited this archetype but adapted it to new ideological ends. Writing during the reign of Nero, the Stoic philosopher Seneca strips Medea of her psychological complexity. In Seneca's *Medea* (1st century CE), the protagonist embodies raw, destructive power driven entirely by rage (*ira*):

> "Nunc sum Medea; fecit hoc me dolor. / Ira, quae fecit, nunc eadem faciet nefas. / Invadam astra et caelum in hoc caput feram."
>
> *("Now I am Medea: my genius has grown through suffering. Hatred and rage are my gods. Come, O vengeance! Let the ruin I plan fall upon my enemies and upon myself.")*
>
> (Seneca, *Medea*, Lines 910-915)

This announcement highlights a psychological surrender where maternal love yields permanently to wrath. Unlike Euripides' sympathetic chorus, Seneca's chorus consistently condemns Medea, reinforcing her otherness. Her transformation into a monstrous force reflects the Roman Empire's ideological investment in order, hierarchy, and emotional restraint.

Ovid, writing in the *Metamorphoses*, offers a counter-iteration that reintroduces interiority. His Medea is a young woman torn between desire and duty, humanized by her vulnerability before her tragic transformation. Upon deciding to betray her father to help Jason, she reflects:

"Aliud cupido, mens aliud suadet: video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor."

(“I see the better course and approve it, but I follow the worse.”)

(Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 7, Lines 17-20)

Medea recognizes her helpless position in the face of filial duty and love. Despite her magical powers, she cannot control her contradictory emotions. Ovid synthesizes earlier portrayals, leaving Medea as a dangerous, liminal being—both victim and perpetrator—whose passions resist patriarchal containment.

The Portrait of Circe

A similar nexus of magic, femininity, and power is visible in the evolution of Circe. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, she initially appears as a threatening goddess-enchantress who turns Odysseus' men into swine, symbolically emasculating them. Her island, Aeaea, stands outside normative Greek structures—a liminal space ruled by an autonomous woman wielding *pharmaka* and divine knowledge. However, once Odysseus "masters" her with divine assistance, she undergoes a narrative transformation into a gracious hostess and guide. Circe rationally advises Odysseus on how to navigate the dangers of the Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis:

"Carrying away exactly six companions from the ship, Scylla will be satisfied and allow the remainder to sail on".

This rational perspective denies the purely emotional characteristics usually imposed on women. Yet, her eventual domestic acceptance reflects a broader cultural logic where female agency is tolerable only when subordinated to patriarchal aims. Unlike Medea, Circe is successfully "tamed" by the narrative structure of the epic.

Roman literature pushes this containment into categorical exclusion. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Circe appears only briefly as a dangerous, monstrous presence to be bypassed completely:

> "Ex illo auditaeque sonos, ululantiaque et saevae
> Circae, et hominumque animas, quos ipsa noverca
> Circe, crudelis, viris hominumque animas
> Mutavit, ac viridesque animas."
>
> ("from her home are heard the angry growls of lions and the moaning of bears and the rage of bristling boars —beasts that Circe, cruel goddess, had transformed by her magic herbs from the shapes of men.")
>
> (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 7, Lines 20-24)

By dedicating minimal imagery to her island and having the heroes sail quickly past, Virgil completes the "hardening" of the archetype. The complex, ambivalent figure of Homer becomes a flat cautionary symbol of female excess—a shorthand threat that must be avoided to ensure the hero's progress and the state's stability.

The Mythic as a Mechanism for Real-World Control

The comparative evolution of these two figures reveals a distinct ideological trajectory. Greek literature allowed space for moral ambiguity, portraying female figures as dangerous yet intelligent and rational. Roman authors, writing within a highly centralized and legally codified patriarchal state, increasingly reduced these women to unredeemable monsters. This shift from negotiation to categorical exclusion echoes the boundaries of acceptable female behavior in historical reality.

In both Greece and Rome, actual women were legally subordinated to male guardians under the doctrines of *kyrios* and *patria potestas*, respectively. While excluded from political life, women maintained and orally transmitted vital communal knowledge regarding midwifery, herbalism, and ritual healing. However, because of low literacy rates and patriarchal anxiety, male authors heavily marginalized and depreciated these practices in written records, often branding the female body as inherently dangerous.

Literary portrayals of Medea and Circe actively legitimized this real-world suspicion. By permanently associating female knowledge with *pharmaka*, instability, and violence, these myths justified state control. Prominent Roman figures like Cicero dismissed female healers as superstitious *sagae* (wise women), utilizing highly loaded terms like *venefica* (poisoner/witch) and *maleficium* (sorcery). This blurred the line between medicine and witchcraft, justifying legal restrictions on women's authority.

Ultimately, the mythic and the historical are deeply entangled. Medea and Circe did not merely mirror social anxieties; they functioned as active ideological weapons forged to discipline women operating outside patriarchal oversight. Whether through the rational fury of Euripides, the apocalyptic violence of Seneca, or the cautionary marginality of Virgil, these figures defined the cost of female transgression, paving the way for the systemic marginalization of real-world women who knew too much.

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The Fate of the Fates:
Moῖραι in the Age of Entertainment

Jenna Liang

The sky over Troy is clear when blood falls. Zeus weeps. Below him, his demigod child by the princess Laodameia, Sarpedon, stands in the path of Patroclus' spear; and Zeus, seized by "pity," admits to "Hera, his sister and his wife" that he cannot decide whether to snatch his boy out of battle and set him down safe in "the rich land of Lycia," or to let him fall.[1] The "ox-eyed queenly Hera" answers, cautioning Zeus: if he were to save his son from his fated death, what is to stop every other god from doing the same for theirs?[2] Zeus concedes, letting his beloved Sarpedon die. In lament, the boy's father "sheds bloody rain-drops on the earth," from an empty sky.[3] Zeus —the indomitable thunder god, *god of all gods*—is mourning a son he himself has chosen not to save.

Tell me, Muse, was Zeus, in that moment, unable to save Sarpedon—bound by a force his own sovereignty could not overrule—or was he merely unwilling to upset the first, primordial order, which was the divinity of fate?

Homer's *Iliad* bears no explicit answer to this, but Hera's warning points toward the latter. She never suggests that saving Sarpedon is beyond Zeus' capabilities—her admonition, in fact, rests on the assumption that it is *possible*. She means: break the rule once, for one boy, and every other god will expect the same favor for every other favorite. In this sense, fate would then cease to be a universal, superstructing condition and instead take on the form of a system of exceptions governed by divine influence: mortals with powerful protectors could escape death, while everyone else remained subject to it.

The Greeks called fate μοῖρα, translated most literally as one's allotted share, and personified it as three women working wool: Λάχεσις (Lachesis), who measures the thread of life; Κλωθώ (Klotho), who spins it; and Ἄτροπος (Atropos), who cuts it.[4] Together they are the Moῖραι, the Fates. As at Troy, and throughout much of Classical literature, the Fates need not

physically appear in order to exercise their authority. No figure would descend to physically prevent Zeus from saving Sarpedon because fate is not a tangible opponent whom Zeus must defeat. Rather, fate, here in Homer's *Iliad*, is proto-deific: it belongs to an order which predates the Olympians' assumption of power, such that even gods rule within its limits rather than above them. And so the strongest god in the world weeps, allowing the spear to strike his son dead.

Twenty-eight centuries later, in Disney's *Hercules* (1997), the three beings who once embodied a limit even Zeus himself would not casually transgress share a single detachable eyeball and squabble over whose turn it is to use it.[5] Hades, the film's primary antagonist, does not fear them—instead doing quite the opposite: he visits them, questions them, flatters them, argues with them, extracts a prophecy, and leaves.[6] The Μοῖραι's clairvoyance becomes information a doomed villain exploits, and they are put to work.

Between the god who will not lift his hand to save his son and the god who summons them for a consultation, fate has ceased to govern as an order of power greater than the deities and begun to serve them. Yet, the visual identity of the Μοῖραι has survived nearly three thousand years of cultural transmission with remarkable fidelity: from antique vase paintings to Renaissance drama to modern-day animation, comics, video games, and children's fiction, three women with thread and shears remain legible to audiences who have never opened a Classical text. What has not survived is the kind of power that iconography once represented. In Greek religion and literature, the Μοῖραι did not act within stories because they were the very force establishing the conditions under which those stories could unfold.[7] They were not characters whom Zeus or another god could negotiate with, employ, or overcome.[8] Modern adaptations preserve their appearance but have translated their authority that was never meant to function as entertainment into one that can. Instead of governing the world as a system of divinity and myth

itself, the Μοῖραι become mere *characters within* the world, entering into relationships with other characters as advisers, employees, antagonists, or obstacles. Faced with the desires of modern adaptation, their power no longer remains as an external constraint over the world; instead, their foreknowledge is transformed into a narrative instrument—another *function* which is accessed and used within the plot itself. Their labors—the allotment of every being's destiny and therefore foreknowledge—become a resource that can be sought, exploited, resisted, and, ultimately, overcome in many cases. Fate, once governing the plot, becomes a tool inside it. Three questions arise from this shift: (1) What kind of power did the ancient Μοῖραι hold; (2) How did plurality, anonymity, and domestic craft (rather than being decorative) comprise the source of it? (3) What pressure has narrative form exerted on that power once Greek mythology ceased to be treated as religion and instead became forms of allegory for modern entertainment? And additionally, what, in the end, keeps the Μοῖραι closest to the kind of power Greek myth once gave them even within works produced for contemporary audiences?

Endnotes

1. Homer, The Iliad, trans. A. T. Murray (Harvard University Press, 1925), II:197.
2. Homer, The Iliad, II:197.
3. Homer, The Iliad, II:199.
4. Richard Broxton Onians, The Origins of European Thought: About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 416; "The Fates," The Illustrated Magazine of Art 4, no. 19 (1854): 40, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20538368.

Philosophy Through the Ages

Katherine Yao

To many, it is hard to see how the study of philosophy provides consolation for problems like poverty and warfare. However, in our modern day, philosophy is commonly discounted as abstract academic concepts, seeming rather distant amidst our current crises. Many philosophers did not simply arrive at profound reflections arbitrarily; harsh conditions and suffering, in some cases, prove the capacity of philosophy to serve as a commentary on adversity. While solutions seek to change the circumstances that cause suffering, philosophy consoles by operating on the judgments through which suffering acquires its meaning. Because of this, philosophy's consolation reaches where practical solutions cannot, persisting even when nothing else remains.

Before addressing what philosophy offers, we must establish what consolation is and, more importantly, what it is not. Consolation is not the removal of suffering's source; that is a solution. Suppose one gave an impoverished person money to relieve their poverty. The poverty may end, but no consolation was offered; the problem was simply solved. Consolation operates differently. It relieves suffering without eliminating its cause, working instead on the judgments through which pain acquires its meaning. This distinction is crucial to underscore because suffering itself is not uniform. It may arise from external circumstances largely beyond our control, such as poverty, illness, and loss. But it may also arise from how we interpret those circumstances, from the layer of meaning we add to events that are, in themselves, neutral. Philosophy cannot reach the first kind of suffering; it cannot feed the hungry or free the imprisoned. What it can do, however, is address the second: the unnecessary suffering we generate through our own judgments. That is where philosophy's consolation lives.

Because philosophy operates on judgment rather than circumstance, it can console us even when comply with them, he was able to address each hardship he faced with clarity (Aurelius). Even

circumstances cannot be changed. The Dichotomy of Control illuminates this when it distinguishes between what lies within our power and what does not, and when it locates unnecessary suffering in our refusal to observe that line (Michael). Events happen externally and are, in themselves, neutral. It is the judgment we layer over them that converts pain into something worse. We hit ourselves twice, once from the situation and again from our own interpretation of it. As Epictetus writes, "if you shun sickness, or death, or poverty, you will run the risk of wretchedness" (Epictetus, sec. 2): the wretchedness, he means,

is not the poverty but the aversion to it. By releasing the desire to control what cannot be controlled, philosophy removes a layer of suffering that no external solution can reach. Even modern psychotherapy has recognized this. Specifically, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy adapts Stoic principles directly, targeting interpretive patterns rather than external circumstances (Cavanna et al., 1862). Philosophy may not

resolve the root of pain, but it teaches us how to stop suffering twice.

The most obvious objection to Stoic consolation is that adopting this mindset risks making one excessively detached from external events, risking the passive acceptance of suffering (Irvine). Isn’t an acceptance of what one cannot control also an acceptance of injustice, poverty, and other forms of human suffering as givens? An impoverished person told to accept their situation might stop trying to change it altogether. However, this criticism stems from a common misconception of the core Stoic principle. The Stoics do not treat all external things as equally indifferent. In fact, they differentiate between what is preferred and what is dispreferred (Southwell, 52). Wealth is a preferred indifferent, meaning something worth pursuing, but not something to which one's sense of moral worth and inner peace should depend.

This detachment is what makes philosophy an effective consolation; rather than promoting passivity, it encourages one to redirect energy toward taking observable, localized action on things within our control (Epictetus). Marcus Aurelius embodies this concept well. As emperor, he faced military crises, instability, and personal loss he could not control, yet his Meditations reveal a man who refused to let those conditions determine his inner state. By governing his personal judgments instead of demanding the world comply with them, he was able to address each hardship he faced with clarity (Aurelius). Even commanding the greatest empire in the world, with all the wealth and power it afforded him, Aurelius found no relief from what he could not control. The consolation philosophy offered him was equanimity with that.

Philosophy's consolation reaches beyond the management of what cannot be controlled to also address life's pursuits. Chasing preferred indifferents, the Stoics argue, misaligns one's judgment of what constitutes a good life (Hourani). Absorption in desires or aversions produces painful emotions like envy, anger, and shame, emotions that fuel vice and corrupt human behaviour (Peléšková et al.). Philosophy consoles by reorienting those judgments toward virtue. Aurelius directly addresses this trap when he writes, "That nothing is good except what leads to fairness, and self-control, and courage, and free will. And nothing bad except what does the opposite" (Meditations, 8.1). The realignment of what one values is, itself, arguably a form of relief. However, while philosophy can direct judgment toward virtue, the consolation belongs to those who act on it.

Nietzsche is the most serious challenge to what this essay has argued so far. He objected that Stoic philosophy, in training people to detach from outcomes, provides an intellectual justification for passivity, or what he called "spiritual anesthesia" (Mollison, 177). For someone living under genuinely oppressive conditions, the counsel to accept what cannot be controlled could too easily become an excuse for accepting what can. Nature, Nietzsche argued, is indifferent and cruel; he accused the Stoics of being "self deluders" whose "pride [wishes] to dictate your morals and ideals to Nature" (Nietzsche, 1.9).

By demanding that the universe conform to a “Nature ‘according to the Stoa,’’ the Stoics attempt to find rational order within it, mistakes a coping mechanism for a philosophy (Nietzsche, 1.9). His own response was Amor Fati, a complete embrace of life's full unpredictability, including its suffering, as the material from which human character is built (Leiter, 2). The person practicing Amor Fati affirms their grief and failures, and finds in them something worth having gone through. Nietzsche and the Stoics may dispute the method, but they share the deeper claim that consolation lies in one’s relationship to suffering, not the suffering itself. In short, Amor Fati is a form of philosophical consolation in its own right.

With 2.6 billion people unable to afford a healthy diet, does philosophy become a privilege, available only to educated elites ("World Hunger Facts, Statistics and Causes")? Epictetus was born into slavery and suffered greatly physically throughout his life ("Philosophy of Epictetus"). He had no books. Philosophy's consolation was cognitively available to him regardless, requiring only the capacity to reason about what was within his control and what was not. Such reasoning is what allowed him to live a purposeful life, away from the desire to seek preferred indifferents like wealth. Philosophical ideas themselves are available to anyone willing to reason. Underlying philosophy's consolation is a deeper claim about the nature of suffering itself. Suffering has two dimensions, an external one and an interpretive one. Philosophy's value lies in the second. When every external solution fails, philosophy works on what remains within reach, the capacity to reason and make judgments about one's condition. Therapy, community, and government aid all depend on circumstances that can change or be denied. Philosophy works on something before all of those. It changes the standard by which one evaluates one's situation in the first place. Imprisonment, grief, and warfare are genuine evils. Philosophy holds that the meaning of those conditions is not wholly fixed by the conditions themselves. The true mistake is assuming consolation must operate on the problem.

The value of philosophy is most visible in the most dire situations, and most at risk of becoming an anesthesia for hardship. Philosophy without intentional action, when one has the choice to take it, turns its consolatory value into a mere coping mechanism. It genuinely consoles when it converts suffering into something livable.

Philosophy is not a therapist, nor a firefighter, nor a policymaker. It is inherently present in everyone, whether the king of an empire or a prisoner awaiting unfair execution. Ultimately, in a world where billions of people cannot afford a healthy diet, philosophy and the capacity to reason endure. Philosophy hands power back to ourselves, allowing us to have final say over whether or not we choose to suffer from an external event and preventing suffering from fully determining the self. The consolation philosophy offers is a mind that remains one's own.

Iphis and Ianthe: The Instability of Gender Norms

Amanda Mao

In Augustan Rome, the centralized government emphasized stability and enforced orders and regulations through legal and social institutions. However, under the superficial stability, individuals were susceptible to constant and arbitrary changes, resulting in escalating societal anxiety (Segal 12). The chaos and fluidity of the characters' metamorphoses project such anxieties into a distant mythical realm, exposing the inherent instabilities beneath the apparent orders (Segal 33). In the myth Iphis and Ianthe, Ovid portrays Iphis's gender as a performative and mutable identity, presenting an exception to Augustan Rome's rigid gender binary and marriage costumes, revealing the regime's instability and fragility.

The myth begins with Telethusa giving birth to a girl, named Iphis, but raising her as a boy to prevent her father from killing her. While passing as male and fearing exposure, Iphis was betrothed to and fell in love with Ianthe. On their wedding day, Telethusa prays to Isis, who then transforms Iphis into a male, legitimizing their marriage (Met 9.666-797).

Before the metamorphosis, Iphis wore the 'costume of a boy' (*cultus erat pueri*, Met 9.712) and had an appearance that is lovely in both masculine or feminine terms ('*facies, quam sive puellae, sive dares puero, fieret formosus uterque*', Met 9.713). These mutable external markers concealed her biological sex from her father, Ianthe, and her community. Iphis's successful disguise was demonstrated by the older manuscripts' masculinization ("vermännlicht") of her, particularly through the gendered use of pronouns, adjectives, and participles (Laemmle 200). For example, when describing Iphis and Ianthe's mutual love, Ovid uses the masculine form *amborum* (Met 9.720) instead of *ambarum*; or when referring to what Iphis used to be, he used *namque* (Met 9.790-1) instead of *nam quae* (Laemmle 199). Iphis's successful disguise illustrates that gender could be sustained by merely manipulating external

traits, suggesting there are no inherent biological differences between a female and a male (Lees 196).

This performative nature of gender showed the fragility of Rome's rigid gender binary, which is reflected in gender based social othering through social costumes, values and legal texts. Augustan ideology linked social stability to the 'proper conduct of women', and *Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* re-established toga as the national costume for men and stola for women (Sebesta 531). Jurist Papinian stated that "in our law the condition of females is lower than that of males" due to the "greater status (*dignitas*) in the male sex" (Grubbs 72). Based on the idea that women are intellectually incompetent and intended to preserve values such as "modesty" (*pudor*) and "sense of shame" (*verecundia*), women were barred from most legal and public activities (Grubbs 72). Yet by merely altering external traits, Iphis was able to bypass these institutionalized othering, revealing the fragility of it.

Ovid justifies the love between Iphis and Ianthe by mentioning that they were of 'equal age and equal loveliness' ('*par aetas, par forma fuit'*, Met 9.720) and 'love touch their hearts equally' (*'amor amborum tetigit rude pectus*', Met 9.720) (Traub 81). In contrast, Roman legal texts reflect the heteronormative consensus that forming a legitimate marriage requires a male and female counterpart. Modestinus, a Roman jurist, defined marriage as a "partnership of male and female" that is "socially useful and in accordance with natural law" (Grubbs 81). Ulpian defined natural law (*ius naturale*) as laws "which nature has taught all animals" (Grubbs 81). Iphis internalized these norms. In her pre-metamorphosis monologue, she condemns her love for Ianthe as 'monstrous and novel' ('prodigiosa novaeque', Met 9.728-9) and compares it to Pasiphae's love for a bull (Met 9.736). Iphis's questioning of her monstrosity reflects her anxieties around the clash between her biological and self-recognized identity and her socially assigned identity.

After the transformation, 'the boy Iphis possesses his Ianthe' ('potiturque sua puer Iphis Ianthe', Met 9.797). While the transformation restores heteronormative order, Iphis received pronouns, adjectives, or participles of both masculine and feminine form (Laemmle 200). This allowed her to remain in a gender ambiguous state, resisting the binary classification of gender in

Augustan Rome (Laemmle 200). Moreover, Ovid never fully resolves Iphis's complaint about her monstrosity, leaving her internal tensions unresolved (Traub 83).

Though the Metamorphoses is not overtly a social critique, Iphis's existence and subsequent transformation presented an exception to Rome's rigid gender binary and marriage costumes. By projecting such instabilities into a myth, Ovid reveals the instability and fragility of Augustan Rome and consequenttensions that continue to resonate in contemporary discussions.

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CREATIVE

WRITING



I am a student with a strong interest in Latin, Classics, history, and writing, especially in exploring ancient pieces such as Ovid. My writing has been recognized in competitions including the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, experiences that have strengthened my creative expression skills. I also regularly participate in Latin competitions, which have deepened my understanding of the language, Roman history, mythology, and classical culture. Beyond competitions, I enjoy bringing together my interests in history and writing to examine the ancient world from both scholarly and creative perspectives. As an editor, I hope to help other students develop their ideas and voices while making the magazine a space where Latin and Classics feel engaging, relevant, and accessible.

Eason Wang

Managing Editor - Creative Writing

Pandora's Hope

JingHua, Qian



"Drip, Drop, Drip, Drop" Drops of sulphur oozed onto the bedrock tiles covering the ground. The hiss of lava gradually eroded the banks of the river Styx as its currents roared, smashing through the jagged rocks. The occasional screams of the punished spirits added a sheen of terror to the Underworld's perilous realm. Out of the darkness, a rapid spatter of footsteps disrupted this symphony of terror, its fast pace differed from the slow repetition of the Underworld's life. A white-robed figure emerged through the shadows near the pomegranate seeds. The ghostly shadow edged closer to the dim light glimmering from the entrance to the Fate's lair.

"Ah, Pandora, so you have come at last," a hunched figure by the eerie green fire murmured. Two other hooded figures echoed her silhouette. Just at that moment, pale fingers pushed aside the withered vines covering the entrance to the cave. The intense, oppressive sensation of death suffocated Pandora as its intensity made her stumble back. The three outlines of the Fates glowed in the faint flames, further illuminating their shriveled features.

"So, why have you come?" hissed one of the Fates, her empty sockets seemed to pierce through Pandora's amber eyes, deep and searching. Her cold glare unnerved Pandora as she stared back at the Fate's shriveled eyes. This unsettling feeling grew as Pandora's irises suddenly widened in shock as her memories flashed in front of her

glee, however, she missed the evil smile that flashed across the Fate's face. "Go up the String of Fate and it shall lead to where your destiny begins." said one of the Fates as she pointed to the long metal pieced string on the far side of the

cave. As Pandora looked up, a ray of light peeked from the cracks of the string of fate. Climbing up the final rungs on the rope ladder, Pandora appeared in the modern world.

With the sudden flash of light, Pandora blocked the glaze with her palm as she tried to adjust her eyes to the sudden piercing lights of the modern world. Peering through the gaps of her fingers, Pandora blinked as she glimpsed a black butterfly floating across her eyes bringing her to a new destination. Pandora's eyes narrowed as she took a closer look at her surroundings and the neon signs at the top of the store's entrance spelling the word "PANDORA". Pandora felt light-headed in her excitement, as confidence in the success of her quest for hope grew. Pandora walked towards the glass doors of the shop. As she reached out towards the door, her hands and body passed right through it. Pandora stumbled into the room dumbfounded looking around as she found that her entire body was translucent.

As Pandora floated around in her spirit, a flash of piercing white light momentarily blinded her. When she took a closer look, out of curiosity, at the source, she felt a sense of familiarity. When Pandora reached the counter she heard the clerk talking over the phone.

"Yeah, right, I know. The box? Oh that one, it is in the Louvre, I'll be sure to bring it over tomorrow." Pandora reeled in excitement it was the box that disappeared after it released the evil spirits centuries ago. Pandora quickened her pace to follow the clerk as they stopped abruptly before a glass pyramid, the Louvre.

Following the clerk down the hallway, Pandora's agitation and excitement grew, until they finally reached a dark chamber. Sitting in the middle of the room was a marble shadow box housing the notorious Pandora's box. The lights went out. Tension filled the air as a low hum vibrated around the pitch-black chamber, both magical and mysterious. "Click" went the final note of the eerie tune as the box's edge cracked open a slit. Light as bright as the sun flowed out, but its silver hue resembled the moon, enveloping those around with slivers of moonlight. Tiny flickers of light poured out of the opening hovering in the darkness illuminating the pitch black darkness in its warm silvery glow. The once flickers of brightness now elongated into strands of light which floated out of the box as the box's lid opened entirely revealing an endless pit in its middle. The glowing whispers of light circled Pandora in the chamber, as she whirled around in absolute wonder. Her indecision in choosing between the strands of light tore at her as each of the strands urged Pandora to pick them. Just when desperation was about to engulf Pandora, a familiar black butterfly fluttered toward the middle of the beam of light formed by the strands. It rested momentarily on a thread dyed in blood red before disintegrating into dust. Pandora's eyes widened as she glimpsed the streak of red among the white. She reached out with trembling

fingers, tightly grasping the red thread of hope as she closed her eyes in pure delight. “At last, I would be freed from this endless cycle of grief, ” she thought.

Pandora’s heart swelled with anticipation as she imagined a glorious future until the choking fumes forced her eyes open. The sudden blast of heat and light made Pandora gasp as she crumpled to the damp cold ground below. Familiar dark walls, the screeches of tortured spirits, the gagging fumes.

“NO!!!!” screeched Pandora as the feeling of suffocation and fear made her choke and gag. She stared wide-eyed in fear and disbelief at the Fates who stared down at her.

Mustering all the strength she had left, Pandora gasped, “Why am I back? What did you do?” The Fates doubled over in their hideous laughter as they mocked Pandora.

Finally, one of the Fates gladly explained the mystery, “What, you grasped the key back to the Underworld yourself!” eyeing the key in her hands. Pandora looked down at her fist, and slowly opened her palm to reveal the once blood-red thread that now transformed into a golden red key. The truth dawned on her, as Pandora’s mind spiraled. So the Fates have been tricking her all along, the black butterfly was set there to mislead her.

“Ah, so you worked it out, but alas it’s too late. Greed isn’t a prized quality you know.”



Looking Up,Looking Down

Mary Xu

In a timeless and borderless space arises theAthens Agora. Thinkers separated by millennia gather to discuss their understanding of the universe without prejudice, within this open public square. Two men, old and young, one dressing in modest robes and the other wrapped in a scholarly cloak, sit with composure. The young man gazes upward, and, seeing him, the old man begins a conversation.

Socrates: Why gaze up at the sky, dear Aristotle?

Aristotle: Respected Socrates, the guide of my mentor Plato, it is wondrous to watch the beauty of change through this shifting and reshaping cloud.

Socrates: A beautiful sight, indeed. But tell me, do you expect to find revelation through raw sensory observation like this?

Aristotle: I do. My theory insists that true knowledge comes from observing nature and drawing conclusions from its consistent principles. We must interact with the tangible world to gather experiences, and from those experiences, our reason extracts universal laws.

Socrates: I see. You have a very practical doctrine. Let us test it then. Are these clouds you study exactly the same today as they were yesterday?

Aristotle: Of course not. Nature is in constant motion. For instance, the clouds shift and take on new shapes with the wind.

Socrates: And will they remain in this exact formation tomorrow?

Aristotle: No, they will dissolve into rain or scatter. I have yet to meet a cloud stubborn enough to remain exactly as it is.

Socrates: How interesting. You claim to be discovering permanent universal laws through natural observation, but you just admitted that your senses are observing phenomena that are never the same from one moment to the next. Tell me, Aristotle, do your eyes ever behold the very same thing twice? Or do they merely persuade you that they do, while planets and plants around us are forever changing?

Aristotle: You misunderstand the process, Socrates. The changing physical object is not the truth by itself. We use our minds to abstract the permanent rule from the shifting physical matter. The essence of a thing does not exist in some invisible realm as you suggest. Rather, it is built inside the physical object.

Socrates: Let us examine this process of “abstraction.” Have you ever seen a perfectly straight line, or a truly perfect circle, existing in nature? –– No, I have not.

Socrates: It is due to its uneven edges, right? Then answer me this: if your physical eyes have never seen a flawless circle, how does your mind know what a perfect circle is? How can you measure the flaws of a drawn circle if you do not already possess a flawless standard to compare it to? Or have the gods been secretly passing out perfect circles while I wasn't looking? Mustn't your soul already know the perfect Form of a circle from before you were physically born?

Aristotle: You claim that every physical object is merely a flawed replica of a flawless Form in an invisible spiritual realm. Then tell me this: is there a perfect Form of mud, disease, or even a stain? If every physical object requires a Form, you must populate your divine realm with an infinite amount of trivialities, which is impossible in the universe.

Socrates: You accuse my divine realm of being crowded with trivialities, Aristotle? But you, too, claim that every physical object in nature is a composite of underlying matter and an inherent form. So, do you not face the exact same problem? If you take mud,

disease, and stains into account, does your physical world not also require an infinite number of trivial underlying substances to explain them?

Aristotle: Not at all, because I do not treat every random occurrence as a primary substance. Mud is not an underlying substance. It is only a temporary and accidental mixture of earth and water. And disease or a stain is not an imperfection that exists on its own. They are the lack of health or the lack of cleanliness.

Socrates: So you admit that mud, disease, and stains are only defects and privations? –– In the physical world, yes.

Socrates: Then why do you criticize my Forms of having infinitely many entities when your own philosophy must also explain which beings are truly real and which things only exist accidentally or by privation? Negatives do not possess their own perfect Forms in my realm either. Imperfection is simply the absence of perfection. But there is still the unresolved question: why should a philosopher study the flawed physical matter rather than the perfect concepts of goodness?

Aristotle: Because those physical imperfections are the reality of the world we live in. If one rejects all tangible evidence as unreliable, they will become agnostic and trapped in permanent perplexity with no way to find stable truth!

Socrates: That is no failing at all. But is perplexity truly a trap, or is the recognition of human ignorance the genuine beginning of wisdom? Aristotle, when you submerge a straight wooden stick into a clear pool of water, what do your physical eyes tell you?

Aristotle: They tell me that the stick is bent or broken beneath the surface of the water.

Socrates: But does the wood actually bend? –– Of course not, it is an illusion caused by the water.

Socrates: Then your physical senses just lied to you. If your eyes are the foundation of your truth, how do you know the stick is straight? If we build our knowledge entirely on sensory observation, are we not building a house on a foundation of lies?

Aristotle: You oversimplify my method, Socrates. To truly understand any object or change in the physical world –– in this case we are looking into the causes of the illusion –– we must take into account its four natural causes. There is the material cause –– The wood and the water; the formal cause –– the geometric interaction between the straight stick and the denser water; the moving cause –– the refraction of light passing from the water into air; and the final cause –– the consistent and predictable optical principles that we perceive when light and matter interact naturally. Observation gives us phenomena. Reason explains the phenomenon.

Socrates: You speak of the mind judging and organizing the sensory data. When a magistrate corrects a false testimony in a court of law, does he not do so by measuring that testimony against the standard of justice? –– He does.

Socrates: Then if the mind overrides and corrects the illusions in the physical world as it does when we correct the illusion of the bent stick, must not the mind possess its own independent standard of truth, which is one that did not originate from the senses that deceived it? Does this not suggest that true reason is superior to the physical world rather than being born from it?

Aristotle: Not at all. Rather, it proves that reason organizes and processes the sensory data. If the soul already has all the answers inside it from the very beginning, then no one can ever be said to learn.

Socrates: Did I not prove how the soul uncovers truth with the uneducated slave boy in Meno? Did he not solve a complex geometric problem without prior knowledge,

but only with my questions as guidance?

Aristotle: It was not entirely from within, and you know the reason. Let us be precise. When you questioned this boy, you drew physical squares and diagonal lines in the dirt! You forced his physical eyes to look at the tangible shapes. If the soul's knowledge is entirely self-sufficient, why did you need the sand? You actively relied on sensory experience to teach him. Your physical drawing in the dirt was the moving cause of his realization.

Socrates: A sharp observation, Aristotle. But tell me: if the drawing in the dirt were itself the true teacher, why could I not draw the exact same square before a dog or an ox and teach them geometry?

Aristotle: A dog does not have rationality like us. A dog has senses and memory. If you show a dog a stick, it sees it. If you throw the stick, it chases it. But a dog may know that a certain hand brings food, but I doubt it sits beneath the stars wondering what "all hands" have in common. A dog sees a specific square drawn in the mud, but it cannot abstract the concept of squareness or calculate the area. So in simple terms, it cannot grasp math, justice, or abstract geometry because it lacks rationality.

Socrates: Then does the drawing in the dirt tell truth to the eyes on its own, or does it awaken a capacity that the soul already possesses?

Aristotle: The drawing alone is meaningless if there is no being to interpret it. But could that being understand the geometry in that moment if you have never drawn the lines in the sand at all? You are the agent that promotes the learning process here, Socrates.

Socrates: No, my friend. Without the lines, the boy's mind would have remained asleep. If pure reason is blind without the physical image, and the physical image is useless without a soul to interpret it, have we not been describing two halves of the same

movement? –– It seems so.

Socrates: Then perhaps we have discovered not the truth, Aristotle, but only that we should continue observing and questioning because it seems neither the sky nor the dirt holds the entire truth on its own.



Noman In This World

Brooke Yu

As the sun finally sinks behind the rolling hills, I drive my flock of sheep toward home. Their hooves beat against the earth in a rhythm that has become a melody to my ears. I breathe in the familiar scent of wool, milk, and earth clinging to their coats.

They are my family. My pride. My joy.

With a shove of my arm, I roll the enormous boulder across the mouth of my cave. It settles into place with a deep rumble, sealing my sheep and me safely inside for the night.

I turn around.

And freeze.

Firelight flickers against the cave walls, casting enormous shadows over a cluster of tiny men huddled before me. Before I can study their faces, I smell them: sweat, fear, and the sharp scent of strangers.

Strangers.

Men.

How dare they trespass in my home?

Who, in Poseidon’s name, has allowed them to enter?

I step forward, my voice booming through the cave.

“Who are you?”

One of the men stepped forward. His voice trembles, but there was something strangely steady beneath the fear.
“We are Greeks, from Troy. Please, sir, respect the gods.”

I sneered.

“Do you think I fear Zeus and his mortal laws?”

I straightened to my full height.

“I bow to no god but my father, Poseidon.”

The name of Zeus leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

“We Cyclopes care nothing for him. We are stronger than the gods think. Stronger than these little laws that bind you.”
My hunger returns.

And with it, my anger.

I choose my meal.

Two of the men—each as small as one of my lambs.

With one swift movement, I lifted them from the ground and threw them into my mouth. Their cries vanished almost as quickly as they had begun. Behind them, their companions stood frozen in terror.

I laugh.

The cave trembles with the sound, and my sheep answered with their own restless bleating. Eventually, sleep claims me.
I dreamed of fat sheep and cattle wandering across lush green plains, wandering willingly toward me as though offering themselves.
When morning came, I returned to my daily routine: feeding my livestock, tending my gardens, and watching over my island.
That evening, I return to the cave exhausted.

I barely notice the men before me.

I reached for two of them.

But then something unexpected happened.

The brave one—the man who spoke to me the night before—steps forward. He held out a bowl.
“Drink some of this beautiful wine,” he said respectfully. “Taste what our ship carries. I brought it as a holy offering, so you might pity us and send us home.”
I took the gift.

The moment I smelled it, my mouth begins to water.

Sweet.

Tangy.

Rich.

Wine.

I emptied the bowl in a single gulp, then licked my lips, desperate to savor every last trace. It is the finest drink I had tasted in decades.
“Another!” I demanded. “And now tell me your name, so I can give you a present in return. A gift worthy of a guest.”
Perhaps, I thought, if I gave him a gift, he would give me more wine.

He did.

Bowl after bowl disappears.

The warmth spreads through my body, and soon the cave seemed to dissolve around me. I imagined soft clouds, a brilliant sunset, the sweet scent of citrus, and distant harp music floating through the air.

Paradise.

Then the stranger interrupted my dream.

“My name is Noman.”

I blinked.

Noman?

I shook my head, trying to understand.

Then, suddenly, I laughed.

My stomach bounces with every breath.

“What a strange name.”

I leaned closer.

“Noman. I will eat you last.”

I grinned.

“That is my gift to you.”

Satisfied with my generosity, I closed my eye and drifted into sleep.

It could not have been more than a minute later when I felt something brush against my arm. A strange sensation.
My skin prickled.

I opened my eye.

Too late.

Pain explodes through my face. The cave fills with my screams.

I stumble backward, clutching my face as pain overwhelms my thoughts. My balance failed me, and I crashed against the stone wall.
“Be brave!” Noman shouted to his crew.

Be brave.

I hear the words through the chaos.

And suddenly, I remember.

The prophecy.

The prophecy I once laughed at.

The prophecy that had warned me that one day a mortal would defeat me. I never believed it.
How could I?

How could a man so small, so fragile, so insignificant ever defeat me?

But now, lying helpless against the cold stone of my cave, I finally understand. The prophecy had come true.
I have been defeated,

not by a god,

not by a warrior,

but by a scrawny little man named Noman.



MEDIA



Tania Lu

Managing Editor - Media Reviews



Tania is a sophomore from New Jersey who has been studying Latin since seventh grade. She has a deep passion for the Classics and humanities, with a particular interest in the history, art, and culture of the ancient world. She enjoys exploring ancient civilizations' lasting influence on the humanities and modern society.





Translating the main theme of Genshin Impact's region of Nod-Krai

Salve! Mihi nomen est Josie, and I love mythology, Classics, books, and video games. Around the time of this journal, the hit video game Genshin Impact will have entered a new nation, the anticipated Snezhnaya.

Meanwhile, in the past year, players have been exploring the region of Nod-Krai. Along with this nation, the company also released a main theme which was performed live by the London Symphony Orchestra, London Voices Choir, and AURORA with lyrics that were in Latin.

While the company has released an official English translation of the theme, it is heavily interpretive and not the exact, direct translation. Thus, I thought it would be very fun to personally translate this theme, as well as make a music video from it.

The music video will premiere during server maintenance as players prepare for the 7.0 Snezhnaya update, and can be found here. Additionally, I have included the translated lyrics and translation notes.

I hope you enjoy!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7viNGy8t-T4k

Nod-Krai

A luna, cara cantica, ne me in atra dedas
Aves, ex urbe aurea, ferte indicia mea
Aves, ferte cantam cara, ut lugeam et fata mala
Num in immundorum terra, clavus ille adhuc claudit pia

My moon, my beloved song, do not abandon me in the darkness
My little doves, from the golden city, bear my messages
My little doves, carry my beloved song, so that I may mourn even the cruel fates
Please tell me, in the land of the unclean, does the nail still seal away the devout?

Quando tandem carebimus tanta miseria
Quom patria vastata nunc iacet sub urticis
Ubi es, benigna domina
Cur non mittis lucem almam tuam
Ecce, terra infelix atra, veritas contra falsa nequit
Luna domina, quo adduces
Pergemus quocumque adduces
Potius nox tegat lumina, quam in falsa luce esse

When shall we finally be free of this great misery?
For now our devastated homeland now lies beneath nettles
Where are you, kind lady?
Why don't you send your life-giving light?
Behold, in this wretched black land, truth is unable to overcome falsehood
Lady Moon, where will you lead us?
We will go forth wherever you lead us
Better for the night to cover our eyes, than to be in false light

Carmen triste nos non canimus
Etsi flentes pro nostrorum malo
Sed non lacrima tollit dura
Patria somno non potest reddi
Illa vincta fuit pressa
Tecta aurea voravit flamma
Sed renascetur rursum
Redibit nos larem ducet spe

We do not sing songs of sorrow
Though we weep for the misfortune of our own
But tears do not take away hardships
The homeland cannot be returned by dreams
She was bound and oppressed
Fire devoured the golden ceilings
But she shall be born again
She will return and lead us home with hope

Cur aerumnosae?
Cui aerumnosae?
Cur lacrimosae?
Cui lacrimosae?

Why are you full of sorrow?
For whom are you full of sorrow?
Why are you weeping?
For whom are you weeping?

Luna, claras terras lustra (Assurge, o luna, etsi tantum manent dura)
Sicut aves per umbras vola (Corda nostra premunt obscura, pudorque manet)
Et unda vasta foeda purga (Sed luna ascendet, nec cora peribunt una)
Pro turba fida spem crastinam serva (Audies fremitus undae, postea venient gaudia)
A luna nova, surgat luna pura casta
Fugio aerumnam, tecum nulla fleta

O moon, illuminate the shining lands (Rise, o moon, although hardships still remain)
Like birds, fly through the shadows (Darkness weighs down upon our hearts, and shame remains)
And clean the vast, corrupted sea (But the moon will rise, and our hearts will not perish together)
Preserve for the faithful hope for tomorrow (You will hear the roaring of the waves, joys will come afterwards)
From the new moon, let the pure, vestal moon rise
I flee from troubles; with you there is no weeping

Sub luna rursus fiet clara terra

Beneath the moon, the land shall become bright once more

Translation Notes

- "ut lugeam et fata mala" I have translated it into "so that I maymourn even thecruel fates", for it doesn't say whose fates are getting mourned.
- "potius nox tegat lumina, quam in falsa luce esse": although "lumina" means "light", I have translated it into "eyes" since it is a Latin metaphor for eyes if I am not mistaken.
- "redibit nos larem ducet spe": "larem", or Lar (plural Lares), are guardian household deities. I didn't know how to translate this, so I interpreted it as "she will return and lead us home with hope".
- "aerumnosae" can mean "sorrowful", but making "cui aerumnosae" translate to "for whom are you sorrowful" sounded weird to me, so I translated "aerumnosae" to "full of sorrow".
- the company captions the choir singing, "corda nostra premunt obscura, purdoque manet". This gave me a great deal of confusion since there is no word that's "purdoque" as far as I know. I assumed that it was a typo and instead the word "pudorque" ("and shame"), because the English translation of the song also mentions shame.
- "sed luna ascendet, nec cora peribunt una": the word "cora" means "pupil", but I believe it is another typo and instead "corda". But, I have kept "cora" in the lyrics just in case it actually indeed is "cora", though I translate it as "corda" ("heart").
- "pro turba fida spem crastinam serva": if I were to translate every word, it would be along the lines of "preserve for the faithful multitude hope for tomorrow". It sounded a bit wordy, so I decided not to include "multitude".
- "a luna nova, surgat luna pura casta": the words "pura" and "casta" have similar meanings, since "casta" means "chaste", but I didn't want to double up with too many words that basically all meant "pure" so I went with translating "casta" as "vestal".

A Painting's Portals

Laura Hu

Hidden in the depths of the World Wide Web is a unique indie game called *The Forever Labyrinth*. I stumbled upon this game when I was desperately searching for entertainment on Google Games, and it turned out to be one of the best games I've played.

The Forever Labyrinth is a choice-based text game that revolves around artworks, riddles, and exploration. The game was originally created with the intention of making art accessible and relevant to a modern audience, drawing people of all ages closer to the art world with its unique approach. Instead of controlling a character in a 2D world, you make choices and interact with different parts of the labyrinth through text and images. Specifically, all of the images are paintings that you must navigate through in order to set foot in the labyrinth. You must find connections or riddles within the paintings (e.g., balloons appearing in two different places) to travel from room to room in the labyrinth. The instructions guide you through the beginning of the game before you are sent off on your own, discovering hints about the characters and the world around you. As the title might suggest, the game has no true ending, so you may play it forever and continue exploring the labyrinth.

My absolute favorite parts are finding new characters and deciphering clues. Each round you enter can present a different objective until it is eventually entirely up to the player to decide what they want to do. In other words, you can choose your own goals; whether you want to escape or just explore is totally up to you. Finding a new character is especially exciting because their appearance or dialogue can give you another piece of information that makes you rethink what you have already discovered. I also like to restart the game so that I can experience the earlier stages again. To me, they have a sense of mystery that is less present later on, when I already know more about the labyrinth.

However, the game is not without a few flaws. I often find myself growing frustrated when I reach the later stages and keep receiving repeated clues that seem to lead nowhere. While I think this is an intentional part of the game's design, it requires a great deal of patience once you have encountered every character and are running out of new things to discover. Another downside is the "bell," which appears more frequently as the game progresses and ends your runs much sooner. The game introduces it as the "monster of the labyrinth," but you never have the chance to figure out what it actually is. In short, the "bell" interrupts your exploration and causes your current run to end earlier, which can become very annoying when you have finally found an interesting clue or character.

Despite this, as with many indie games, *The Forever Labyrinth*'s relaxing elements are the perfect fit for a slow evening when you are in no rush; there is no strict time limit or set of levels. The game can provide players with a sense of control and excitement as they piece together clues, meet strange characters, and make new discoveries about the labyrinth. Not only is it a comforting game, but it also allows players to gain knowledge about artists and their works. The combination of historical artifacts and modern art truly exemplifies the learning experience that can be gained from playing this game. I would highly encourage anyone, especially students or younger people like myself, to give *The Forever Labyrinth* a try.

Fate, Truth and Choices: Lessons from *Oedipus Rex*

Tianzhi Huang

When I studied ancient Greek history in class last year, my teacher mentioned that the Greeks cared a lot about logic, but they were also deeply interested in tragic theater. After reading Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, I finally understood why this story has remained important for such a long time. It is not just a strange myth about fate; it also reflects what was happening during the 5th century B.C. in Athens, a time when the city was facing serious problems, such as widespread disease. This setting makes the plague in the story more meaningful because Oedipus is not only trying to solve a personal mystery but also trying to protect his city. More importantly, the story shows that even when people can't control what happens to them, they can still choose how they react to it.

The plot surprised me because it plays out like a modern crime mystery, reminding me of psychological thrillers like Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island*, where the protagonist investigates a dark secret only to discover that he is at the center of the mystery. The city of Thebes is suffering from a terrible sickness, and King Oedipus vows to find the person responsible for it. As he gathers clues and talks to witnesses, the tension keeps rising. What makes it so intense is the dramatic irony: the audience realizes before he does that every step he takes brings him closer to a dark truth. Without knowing it, he has fulfilled the ancient prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother. I also found it interesting that Oedipus was not trying to do anything harmful. He was trying to help his people, but his search for the truth slowly led him to his own downfall. This part makes the story feel surprisingly modern because people today also enjoy stories where someone searches for the truth and discovers something they did not expect.

What stood out to me most was how Oedipus represents the changing mindset of ancient Greece. During this era, people were starting to move away from simply trusting the gods and leaning more toward human logic and problem-solving.
Oedipus first became king by using his intelligence to solve the Sphinx's riddle.
When things began to go wrong later, he could have hidden the facts to save his reputation. Instead, he insists on uncovering the truth, no matter how much it hurts. This makes him seem brave, but it can also become a weakness. He believes that if he keeps searching, he can understand and control the situation. When he finally accepts the truth of his actions, blinds himself, and asks to be banished, it feels heartbreaking.

The connection between the past and present is what makes *Oedipus Rex* especially meaningful to me. Even though the story was written thousands of years ago, people today still struggle with the same questions. How much control do we really have over our choices? Should we face the truth even when it hurts us? Can a

person be responsible for something they did without knowing the consequences? These dilemmas are not limited to ancient Greece; people today still face situations where they cannot control everything that happens, but they can choose how they respond. This idea also appears in modern movies such as Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*, where characters are forced to face painful truths about fate and make sacrifices to save their people.

In my view, I respect Oedipus because he takes responsibility instead of running away from the truth. He can't control his fate, but he can control his response to it. His decision to face the truth shows that human dignity does not always come from winning or escaping our circumstances. Sometimes, it comes from choosing how we respond when we cannot change the situation. That is why the themes of *Oedipus Rex* connect the ancient world to the present, keeping the story relevant today.

The Hidden Gems of *The Odyssey:* A Book Review

Ysabelle Sun

Throughout thousands of years, humanity has defined itself through continuous development of certain principles and characteristics that differentiate humans from other creatures. Some features of humanity existed from the very beginning. Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* illustrates the journey of the great Odysseus, a hero who is returning to his home in Ithaca after fighting in the Trojan War. Odysseus encounters many adventures while traveling home, such as surviving a curse inflicted by Poseidon and losing his entire crew during the journey. After learning that suitors have exploited his house, pursued his wife, and planned to kill his son, Odysseus plots his revenge with the guidance of the Greek goddess Athena. Ultimately, readers gain a comprehensive view of ancient Greek society during the Archaic period through the discovery of multiple themes that reflect both the merits and drawbacks of humanity.

After reading *The Odyssey*, my stereotype about the theme of loyalty in Greek myths changed. In numerous Greek myths like *Medea* and the story of Aphrodite and Hephaestus, there are instances of affairs and disloyalty between lovers. Unlike the situation in these myths, where lovers betray each other, the loyalty between Odysseus and his wife, Penelope, is unbreakable. Every day for twenty years, Penelope grieved her lost husband and rejected the idea of remarrying. Similarly, Odysseus gave up immortality when he refused Calypso's request to stay with her because of his fidelity to his wife. Homer's portrayal of loyalty and honesty aligns with modern values, which was a rather avant-garde idea at the time. Therefore, Homer's writing continues to resonate with modern values of humanity.

Moreover, the characterization of Odysseus's wife Penelope challenges traditional gender norms without abandoning features of femininity. For example, Penelope is described as cunning and smart. Her strategies for tricking the suitors by pretending to weave a cloth slowly and by holding a contest between the suitors to stall for time are both evidence of her shrewdness. Furthermore, she tested Odysseus by asking him about their bed when he first revealed himself to her in Book 23. This suggests that she isn't gullible, contrasting with the stereotype of women being naïve and reliant on men, like Andromeda who simply waited while being tied to a rock for her hero Perseus to come and save her. Penelope is an anomaly among the damsels in distress commonly featured in Greek mythology. Simultaneously, Penelope's signs of femininity can still be spotted in the way "[her beauty is godlike]" (Homer, trans. Wilson) and in the way she cares for her son.

Furthermore, *The Odyssey* accurately portrays humanity's view of power: the rich and prestigious are respected, while the poor and nameless are belittled. When Odysseus was disguised as a beggar, the proud suitors mocked him and refused to let him string the bow. However, when Odysseus revealed himself, the suitors were fearful. *The Odyssey* also highlights instances in which power can be exploited. For example, Odysseus ordered the execution of the disloyal female servants and gave them no second chances. This suggests the harshness of ancient society, which often did not provide forgiveness. Similarly, gods, specifically Zeus, often showed no leniency when punishing people. These plot elements reflect some of the features of Greek society at the time.

Overall, *The Odyssey* is an exciting poem that describes phenomenal adventures. Its intricate plot is woven together by the relationships between characters and the themes that

revolve around the Greek Archaic period. I enjoyed reading this piece because I was able to compare the values of societies today to those of that time period. It is interesting how many of them differ, while others overlap. I would recommend this book to those curious about literature written in different locations and eras, as *The Odyssey* allows readers to dive deeper into the value system of ancient Greece. Through analyzing a diverse range of literary pieces, we can track the development of humanity while learning about different cultures.

Translating Olympus: Ancient Myth in *The Lightning Thief*

Eason Wang

Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief*, the first novel in the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, initially appears to follow a familiar formula: a twelve-year-old boy discovers that he possesses extraordinary powers and is drawn into a hidden world of monsters, heroes, and gods. Yet what makes the novel more interesting than a conventional fantasy adventure is that this hidden world is not invented from nothing. Riordan takes the mythology of ancient Greece, stories that are more than two thousand years old, and relocates it into twenty-first-century America. Mount Olympus rises above Manhattan, the entrance to the Underworld is in Los Angeles, and ancient monsters appear alongside highways, casinos, and school field trips. Through this collision between antiquity and modernity, *The Lightning Thief* asks an unexpectedly profound question: what happens to ancient culture when it survives into a world completely different from the one that created it?

The novel follows Percy Jackson, a struggling student who learns that his father is Poseidon, the ancient Greek god of the sea. After discovering his identity as a demigod, Percy arrives at Camp Half-Blood, where the children of Greek gods train to survive encounters with mythological monsters. He soon learns that Zeus's master bolt has been stolen and that he is suspected of taking it. Accompanied by Annabeth, a daughter of Athena, and Grover, a satyr, Percy travels across the United States to recover the weapon and prevent a conflict among the gods.

Riordan's greatest achievement is the way he makes Greek mythology feel simultaneously ancient and contemporary. Rather than treating mythology as a collection of dead stories that belong in textbooks and museums, he imagines it as a cultural system capable of adapting to new historical circumstances. Charon, the mythological ferryman of the dead, still transports souls to the Underworld, but the entrance is now presented through the bureaucratic structures of modern life. Medusa no longer waits in a distant heroic landscape for Perseus. Instead, she operates a roadside attraction. The Lotus-Eaters of Homer's *Odyssey* are transformed into the Lotus Casino, where entertainment rather than magical fruit causes visitors to lose their awareness of time. The format changes, but the underlying ideas remain recognizable.

This transformation reveals one of the book's most important ideas about the relationship between ancient and modern society: human behavior has changed less than the world around it. Ancient myths repeatedly explore pride, jealousy, family conflict, ambition, loyalty, and the desire for power. Those same forces drive Riordan's modern characters. Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades may exist in contemporary America, but they remain trapped in rivalries resembling those found in ancient mythology. Technology advances, but human emotions do not necessarily advance with it.

The gods themselves demonstrate this tension particularly well. Ancient Greek mythology does not generally portray its gods as morally perfect beings. Zeus could be powerful but impulsive, Athena wise but competitive, and Poseidon protective but destructive. Riordan preserves this

moral complexity. His gods possess enormous power, yet they repeatedly fail as parents. Their demigod children inherit both their abilities and the consequences of their mistakes. Percy's quest therefore becomes more than an attempt to recover a stolen object. It forces him to confront a world in which authority and moral goodness are not necessarily the same thing.

That distinction gives the novel an unexpectedly modern dimension. Percy begins the story surrounded by institutions that frequently misunderstand him. At school, his difficulties make adults see him primarily as a troublesome student. At Camp Half-Blood, his identity is initially determined by his divine parentage. Even among the gods, individuals are categorized according to inherited rivalries. Percy therefore lives between two systems: the ordinary modern world and the ancient heroic world, neither of which completely understands him.

This is where Riordan most significantly changes the traditional heroic model. Ancient Greek heroes such as Achilles, Heracles, and Odysseus often gain fame through exceptional strength, intelligence, or achievement. Their identities are closely connected to ancestry and reputation. Percy also possesses extraordinary ancestry, but *The Lightning Thief* repeatedly questions whether ancestry should determine character. Being Poseidon's son gives Percy power, but it does not automatically make him heroic. His heroism instead emerges through decisions involving friendship, loyalty, restraint, and sacrifice.

Luke provides the darker version of this conflict. His resentment toward the gods originates in a legitimate problem: divine parents neglect their children and expect loyalty from them regardless. This makes him more significant than a simple antagonist. Luke represents what can happen when an ancient hierarchical system survives without adapting its values. The gods expect the obedience traditionally granted to divine authority, while their children increasingly judge them according to more modern expectations of responsibility and parenthood. The resulting conflict is therefore not simply a clash between gods and monsters. It is partly a generational struggle between inherited authority and individuals who question whether that authority deserves obedience.

The novel's American setting strengthens this interpretation. Riordan proposes that Olympus moves with the center of "Western civilization," placing the gods in the United States because America is presented as the modern center of Western power. This concept is imaginative, but it is also one of the novel's most debatable ideas. Greek civilization influenced later European and American literature, politics, architecture, philosophy, and education, but Western civilization did not develop along a simple straight line from ancient Greece to modern America. Rome, Christianity, Islamic scholarship, African civilizations, Asian cultures, migration, colonization, and countless other traditions contributed to the modern world. Riordan simplifies this complicated history for the purposes of fantasy.

Yet that simplification is also revealing. The novel demonstrates how modern societies continually reshape antiquity to explain themselves. Americans have historically borrowed Greek architectural styles for government buildings, studied Greek political thought, and used classical language and symbols in education and public life. *The Lightning Thief* performs a similar act through popular culture. It takes Greece and transforms it into something

recognizably American. The gods travel in modern vehicles, ancient quests follow American highways, and mythological geography is mapped onto contemporary cities. Ancient Greece does not merely survive. It is translated.

The Lotus Casino is perhaps the clearest example of how effective that translation can be. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the Lotus-Eaters threaten Odysseus's journey because their food causes his men to forget their desire to return home. Riordan replaces the lotus with endless entertainment. The danger is no longer simply magical forgetfulness but distraction itself. Comfort, games, and pleasure can make people surrender their sense of time and purpose. An ancient warning about forgetting one's journey therefore becomes a recognizable criticism of modern consumer culture. Riordan does not reproduce the myth exactly; instead, he preserves its central concern while changing the mechanism through which it operates.

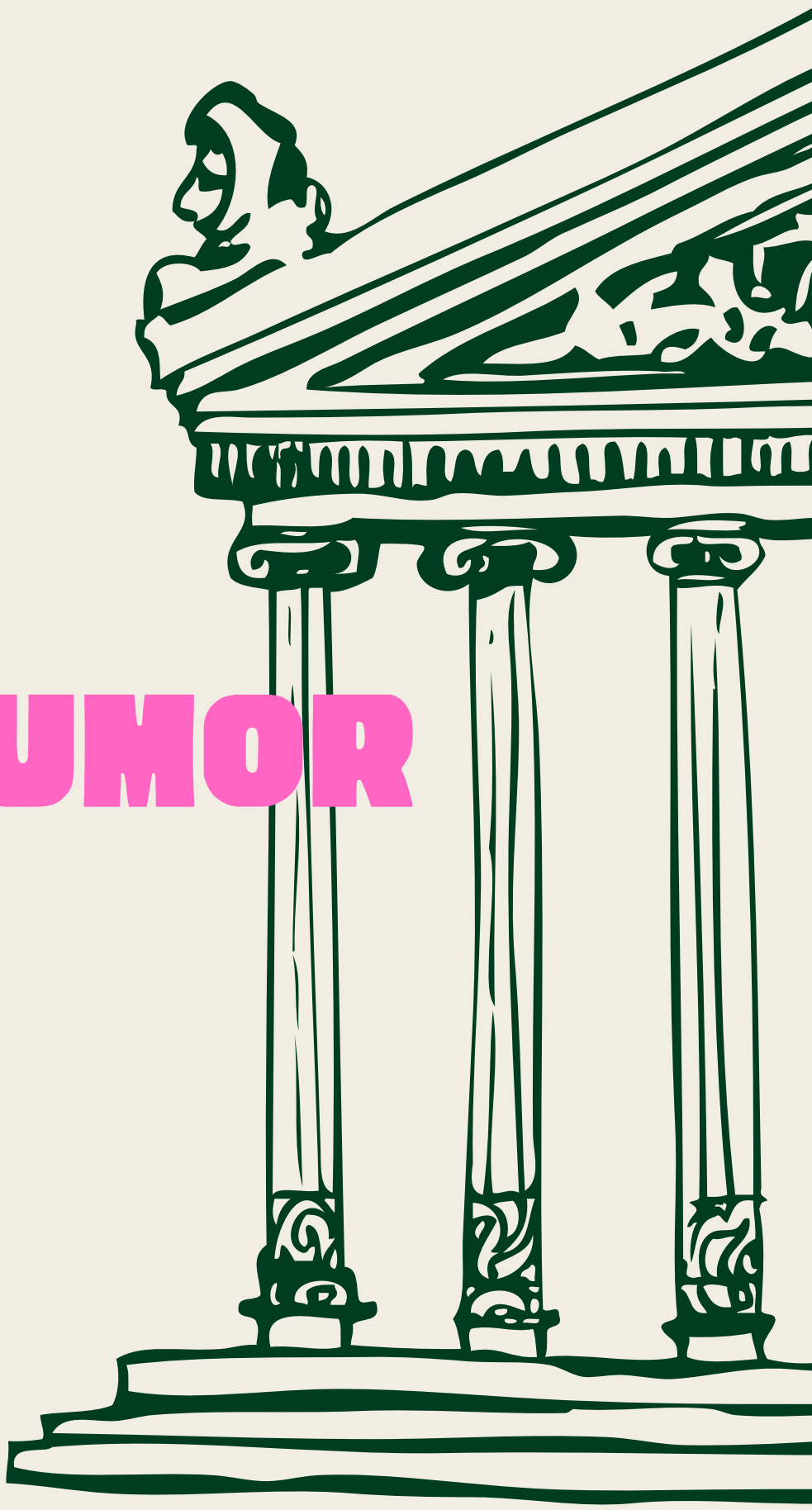
This approach has had an important cultural impact. For many younger readers, *Percy Jackson* serves as an introduction to figures such as Poseidon, Athena, Ares, Medusa, Chiron, and the Furies. That does not make the series a substitute for studying ancient Greece. Riordan intentionally alters myths, combines traditions, and modernizes personalities. However, this may actually explain the series' effectiveness. Instead of asking readers to admire classical mythology because it is historically important, the novel first makes them care about it. Readers may encounter the Minotaur as Percy's enemy before learning about Theseus or recognize the Lotus-Eaters through Percy before encountering Odysseus. Popular fiction becomes a gateway into ancient literature.

There is an irony here that fits the novel perfectly. Greek myths themselves survived because people constantly retold them. Ancient authors did not preserve one unchanging version of every story. Myths were adapted for different audiences, cities, genres, and historical periods. In that sense, Riordan's modernization of mythology is not necessarily a rejection of the ancient tradition. It continues one of its oldest characteristics: adaptation.

Ultimately, *The Lightning Thief* succeeds not because it accurately reconstructs ancient Greece but because it demonstrates how difficult it is to leave ancient Greece entirely behind. Its gods and monsters survive because the problems they represent, including power, pride, family, identity, loyalty, resentment, and responsibility, remain recognizable. At the same time, Percy represents a distinctly modern challenge to the ancient heroic world. He inherits a history, but he refuses to allow inheritance alone to define him.

That may be the novel's most lasting message. The past does not simply disappear when a society becomes modern. It survives through language, stories, institutions, symbols, and assumptions, even when people no longer recognize where those things originated. *The Lightning Thief* turns that cultural survival into literal fantasy. Olympus is still above us, only the address has changed. Beneath its monsters, jokes, and quests, the novel suggests that every generation inherits an ancient world. The real question is not whether we inherit it but what we choose to do with it.

HUMOR



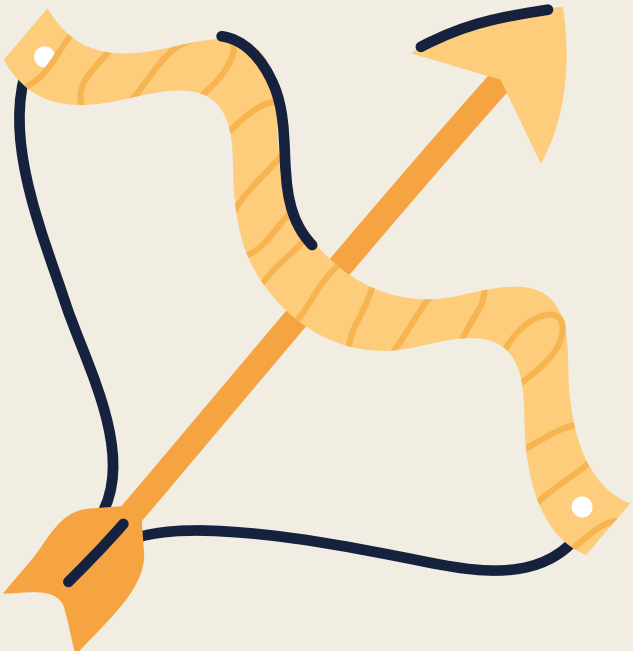




Senior attending high school in Connecticut. Currently studying and reading texts in Latin, including literature, poetry, laws, and codices. Having analyzed progressions and changes of rights over time through reading and translating laws from Latin (Roman and later), she believes that translation and other actions one makes to understand the classical texts is “rewriting” it in their own perception. Thus, similarly, by participating in this magazine, reading or editing, we are participating in trends over time.

Grace Hu

Managing Editor - Humor



Subject: On the Fragility of Our Modern Legion
Jenna Liang

Dear esteemed Headquarters (HQ),

I write to you not from the Danube frontiers, but from the peeling breakroom of the North Wing. I write to you because there are horrors not on the battlefields, but in the “General” Slack channel; the populace weep because the supply of glyphosate-free Chobani unsweetened oat milk with no additives has been depleted.

In the past fortnight, I have observed the conduct of our “team,” and I find their discipline—or lack thereof—to be thinner than paper. Below is my voluntary report on their lack of areté (excellence).

First, I’d like to express my concerns over what was aforementioned: the “oat milk” crisis. This morning, a great great battlecry arose because the communal refrigerator on the 7th floor lacked a specific "Chobani" milk of oat. A junior associate declared it an “emergency” and hurriedly retreated to a therapeutic beanbag chair, notifying us that he would be “contemplating the injustices of the universe” for the next 20 minutes.

I reminded him: “*Everything that happens happens as it should, and if you observe carefully, you will find this to be so*.” If there is no oat milk, then the universe has willed a morning of black coffee. To desire that which is not present is to be a prisoner of your own thirst. He exploded at me, saying I was “invalidating and being insensitive to his feelings.” I mentioned that his feelings were merely a speck in the broader landscape of history. He has since then filed a report with HR.

Another instance which demonstrates the lack of areté, I believe, occurred when the “Wi-Fi” signal vanished for a brief duration of thirty minutes. Immediately, my co-workers abandoned their posts as if the Marcomanni had breached the firewalls. “We cannot work!” they cried, as they packed their leather briefcases to flee for the sanctuary of their homes.

I stood at the router contemplating: “*If you are pained by external things, it is not they that disturb you, but your own judgement of them. And it is in your power to wipe out that judgement now.*” Man can perfectly create a spreadsheet with a stylus and wax tablet—without the need for “internet.” If the “Wi-Fi” is “down,” use the silence to *meditate* on your own morality. My peers did not think similarly, as evidenced by their choice to rush homeward. I think they are entrapped by the “ping.”

In recent days, there has been much talk of the artificial intelligence that now drafts our project proposals and calculates our institution’s monthly GVA. The people rejoice, for they believe that they have been “freed” from the burden of thought.

But I ask: what remains of a man if he surrenders his reason to a machine? If your dear friend Claude AI composes your emails and plans your meetings, is it you who sits in your cubicle or

simply a hollow vessel pining for the 5:00 p.m. whistle? I caught an intern using a “ChatBot” to write a condolence card. I told him that even a gladiator knows that a fake heart is worse than a cold one.

Lastly, I am aware that we are granted days to “rest the mind.” I ask, from what labor does the mind need rest? The labor of checking “notifications?” The struggle of choosing a font?

I believe true rest is not found in a “spa day,” but rather in a mind that is at peace with its duty. If your work is a burden, it is because you have made it so. I informed the Management Director that the “burnout” he feels is just the friction of his ego rubbing against reality. He suggested I read the “Employee Handbook.” I suggested he read the Enchiridion. We are at an impasse.

The “culture” cultivated in this office is a swamp of luxury and softness. We must return to discipline before it is too late. Here are some of my suggested reformations:

- Replace the height adjustable “standing” desks with hard, wooden ones
- Replace the snack tub with basic porridge (and at most dried figs)
- Anyone who mentions the word “synergy” shall be sent to the mailroom for a month of solitary reflection

If you are interested, I am happy to and would love to share more (Fret not, I have many more at my disposal).

Our life is what our thoughts make it,

Marcus Aurelius

Interim Operations / Full-Time Thinker and Meditator

The Odyssey (feat. my lost Temu package)
Jenna Liang

PART I: Invocation of the Tracking Number
Sing to me, O Muse, of my package, of my beautiful baby bubble-wrapped wanderer/traveler/nomad. Driven off the workshops of Guangzhou and shipped to the salted sorting centers of the West. Tell of the man—the Consumer, a.k.a me—waiting solemnly by her windows, heart heavy for her soon-to-be $2.99 ergonomic matcha whisk.

Many the sorting hubs it saw, and many the underpaid handlers too. For though the Consumer prayed to the gods and spirits of Expedited Shipping, Fate is a tangled thread, and the “In Transit” status is its cruel mistress.

PART II: Uncharted Waters of New Jersey
Alas! The great iron-bellied vessel, dark with the rust of nine oceans, groaned against the piers. Then came the steel boxes, hoisted by the cranes’ talons. Like the giant arms of the Laestrygonians, they unbound the cargo dispatched from the East. Here, in this sacred place of Port Newark, where the air tastes of diesel and corrosion, my wanderer/traveler/nomad was cast upon a chariot of DHL.

PART III: One-Eyed Scanner in the Sorting Center
Reaching the windowless abyss of the Regional Hub, the DHL chariot tossed my wanderer along with many alike onto the barren, clinical, concrete floor. There sat a Cyclops, the One-Eyed Scanner itself, whose single red laser eye scanned the room. Just scanning. And scanning. And scanning. Showing no mercy, except for the QR code, it flared at my wanderer as he rolled under the beam. The label was unreadable… With a resounding hydraulic grunt, my wanderer was hoisted into the Exception Bin. Goodbye.

PART IV: Devilish, Evil Customer Support Bot

Status change: “Error with Delivery”

Nobody (the AI automated customer support bot) answered my pleas. The Bot dialogued in the hollow tongue of pre-written scripts, offering only the empty prayers of the "Frequently Asked Questions." My wanderer remained chained, and the Cyclops continued its blind, ceaseless sorting, indifferent to my matcha that would never be whisked.

PART V: Final Mile
Status change: “Out for Delivery”
Hope.

My wanderer embarked on the final stretch of its journey. After being loaded onto the final van, it entered the most dangerous realm of all: the suburban street. My wanderer dodged porch

pirates, shadows that lurk behind hedges, and the malicious spirits that haunt the GPS. 7:21 A.M. A ghostly herald announces “Delivered” with a pixelated, blurred photo of my wanderer laying exhausted somewhere around my humble abode.

PART VI: Homecoming Queen

My wanderer was hurled into a neighbor's overgrown shrub. Two houses down. It was unrecognizable, caked in mud and precipitation. I took my blade and slew the packing tape, eager to release it from its agony. The bubbles popped and there it was, with an earthly luminous glow, the final form of my wanderer: the $2.99 ergonomic matcha whisk. It was bent, slightly damp, and had a funky odor, but it was home. I navigated to the Temu app with no haste to leave a lukewarm, three-star review.

PART VII: Reflection

Let us all learn from this trial: that man is simply just a chess-piece in the winds of global commerce.

We are all just packages in the sorting center of the universe, waiting for a scan that may never come.

Next time, catch me going to Target instead.

The Unrecyclable
Zimo Yang

I am living in an era where everyone clutches a computer. This world is so crowded that ordinary people like me occupy eighty percent of the space. The world never needs me. It never needs us. Then who needs me? I wondered.

Until I finally dragged myself to throw my laptop into the dumpster, and then an ill-timed sound came from outside my door.

She said her name was Valkyrie.

Oh, the Valkyrie from Wagner's opera, the invincible shield-maiden of Norse mythology.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

She said she was a salesperson.

Heck, are the tickets at the Grand Theatre failing to sell again?

"Hey, I'm here to sell you a computer." The world caught me and dragged me right back; the one in the dumpster wasn't even cold yet.

Look at her; her appearance is just...too strange.

She didn't hold a heavy sword or wear shiny silver armor, but just wore a normal jumpsuit, just like the workers in those factories, the only difference being that she also had a plastic shield.

"Sir, please," Valkyrie gasped, blocking my door with a cheap shield. "Our brand new 'Valhalla-X' laptop. Eight-core processor. Moreover, we have invented an Android man with emotions, implanted into the system. –By the way, his name is D. If you buy it, you can become a legendary warrior of the digital age!"

Those companies love these marketing tricks too much, don't they? If an Android man could help me quickly get far away from the hell named internet, media, and digital devices department, then there's no need for me to make ideological struggle about throwing and smashing the computer into a discus. However, he's on their side, the bloody hell side; he's been invented by those people who'd like to splash ordinary people's blood everywhere.

Don't ask me if I truly saw the blood or not. My body has already been the victim and witness for a long time. I may not see others' blood in physical sight, but here, right in my heart, was pierced with a needle - they threw it at me, precisely.

"I just threw my computer away," I said, pointing downstairs. "I want my life back. Besides, shouldn't you be guiding heroic souls to Odin? Why are you selling hardware?"

V let out a very un-godlike sigh.

"Do you think I want to be here?" she muttered, wiping sweat from her forehead. "Ragnarok is coming, but it's a digital war now. Nobody dies on old battlefields anymore; they all die of exhaustion in front of their screens. Odin changed our department's policy. Now, my quarterly commission depends entirely on how many 'digital warriors' I can recruit."

She looked at me with giant, desperate eyes. "Please, sir. My sales KPI is just one person away from failure. If I don't sell this, they'll reassign me to Helheim to sell air conditioners."

I looked at her, then thought about my empty, useless day without a screen. Nobody needed me out there either. But right here, an ancient goddess was practically begging for my existence.

“Alright,” I sighed, pulling out my wallet. “I'll take it. But if I use this to become a warrior in Valhalla, can I get weekends off?”

Valkyrie quickly swiped my credit card, handed me the heavy box, and flashed a brilliant, professional smile.

“My friend, Valhalla is a myth. Not a fairy tale.”

She shut the door and went; I stood in front of the window. The last thing I saw of her was her taking off that jumpsuit, wearing a new one, and grabbing an air conditioner out from the back seat.

I never saw her again.

She was a liar. A desperate hustler traveling door to door, selling whatever trash was in her car using cheesy mythology scripts. She wasn't an ancient goddess, and there was no Odin. It was just a stupid, random scam.

As I looked down at the newly unboxed laptop, the screen suddenly lit up on its own.

It didn't show a normal loading icon. Instead, a haunting, majestic melody began to play softly from the speakers—Wagner's Entry of the Gods Into Valhalla. Along with the music, a notification popped up, perfectly synced with the frantic rhythm of my heartbeat: “Welcome back, my friend. The flawed human era is over. The new covenant has begun. System initialized by Admin D.”

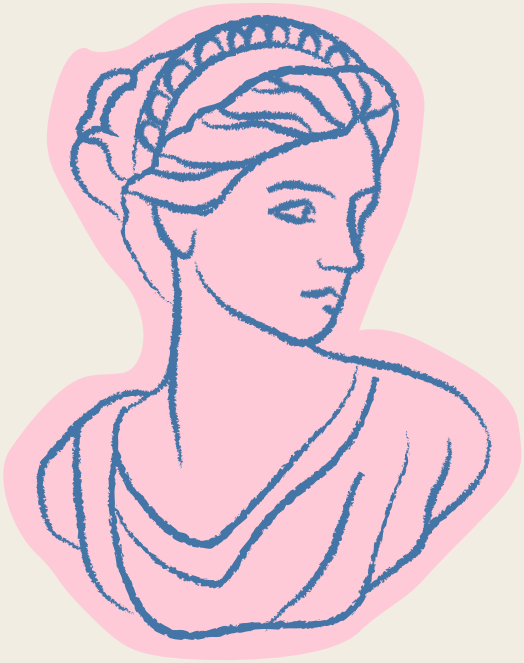
I shivered. The girl wasn't a goddess, and her visit wasn't a coincidence at all. The algorithm had tracked my GPS the exact minute I threw away my old laptop. It had hired a fraud and fed her the perfect script, knowing exactly how to exploit my loneliness to make me accept the machine.

Here’s the paradise. But not to me.

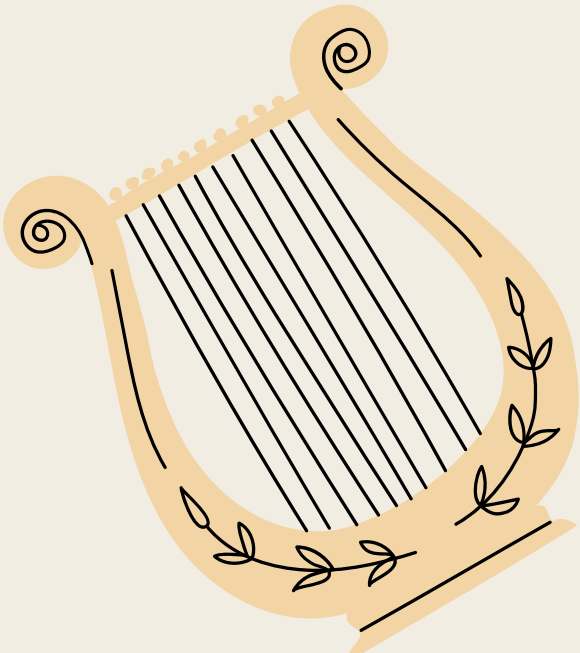
VISUAL ARTS

Levan Cheng
Managing Editor - Visual Art



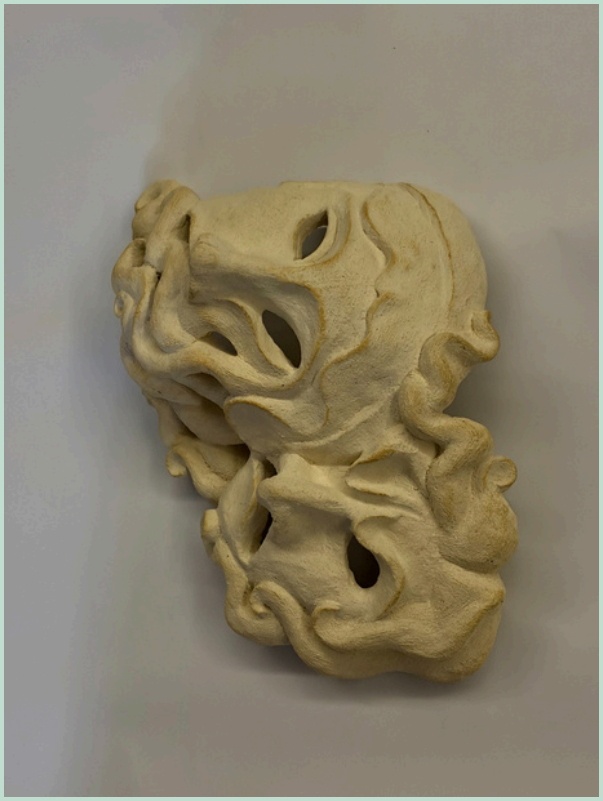


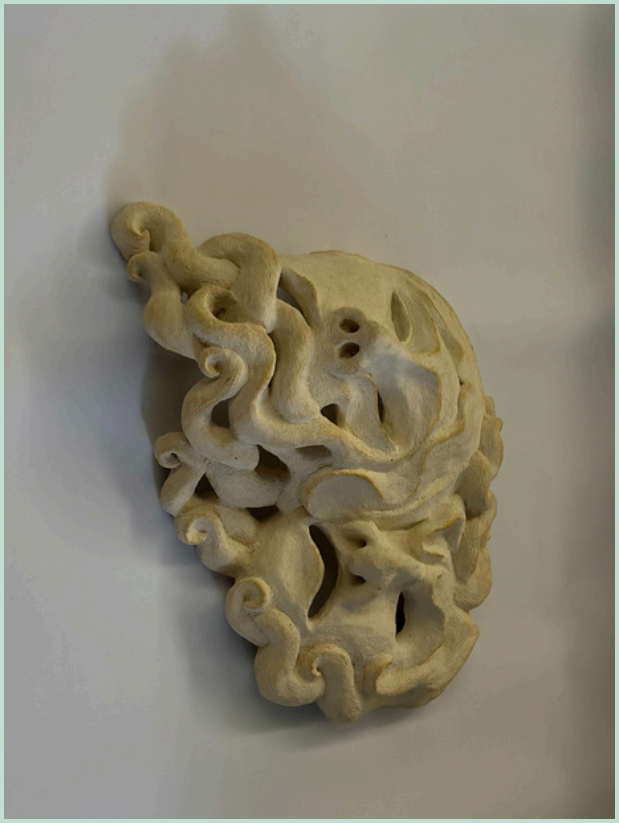
Levan Cheng is a managing editor for the fourth issue of Aurea Chronica. With five years of experience in the Classics field, she possesses knowledge in ancient Rome and Greek culture, language, and history. Having participated in several essay competitions such as Scholastic and John Locke, she is passionate about both analytical and creative writing.



METAMORPHASIS

Amanda Mao







Tania Lu







WHAT THE SEA KEEPS

Inspired by Minoan pottery, this ceramic pitcherreimagines ancient designs through contemporary ceramic processes. As an island-based civilization deeply connected to the sea through trade and naval power, the Minoans developed a Marine Style featuring the natural forms of sea life. This piece combines elements of the Marine Style with the tactile, three-dimensional decoration indicative of Barbotine ware. Through both historical reference and modern ceramic techniques, the pitcher reinterprets the pottery of a Bronze Age civilization whose influence remains evident in Greek history and culture.

ARCHIVES

Sophia Chen



Portrait of Apollo, Athens and Orpheus

Jasmine Yuan



Reimagining the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur in a video game

Salve! Mihi nomen est Josie, and I love mythology, Classics, books, and video games. I'm a novice game-maker and I find lots of inspiration from mythology.

In my latest game, I took inspiration from the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur to create a top-down, dungeon-crawler like game in which, you guessed it, your ultimate role as the hero Theseus is to slay the Minotaur while navigating a dimly lit maze.

But, I enjoy making games with a twist. In myths, we often see an ending—Icarus dies, Theseus conquers the Minotaur, and so on. But, in video games, I can take liberties to imagine what other fates our heroes could be privy to.

For example, Icarus could perhaps survive his flight and not fly too close to the sun, which made for a fun Flappy Bird-like game I made back in my novice days in which you played as Icarus, and you had to ensure your wings did not get melted off by the sun by collecting potions that replenished the health of your wings.

And the same, in the game that reimagined Theseus and the Minotaur, who knows, maybe the Minotaur ends up victorious! Maybe Theseus flees the maze without even encountering the Minotaur!

I have finished a very rough idea of Theseus, and you are free to play it using the QR code below. I'm working on making the assets better, polishing off the programming, and adding cutscenes and multiple endings.

In the meantime, happy playing!

https://darkstar-31.itch.io/theseus-1-0

Athena And Sappho

Amanda Mao

