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Abstracts

First Day, June 3rd, 2026

1st Session: Greek Politics and Literature

Asya C. Sigelman (Bryn Mawr College)

Absent Spectacle in the Second Stasimon of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*

Our age favors visuals over words: increasingly, literature is ceding to cinema, traditional narrative forms to graphic novels, the epistolary art to emojis. The same tendency prevails in modern adaptations of Greek tragedy: one thinks of onstage massacre in Robert McNamara's *Ajax* or graphic incest in Luis Alfaro's *Oedipus El Rey*. The ancient playwrights, however, had a very different understanding of the relationship of *logos* and *opsis*. What a modern audience expects to see enacted onstage—murders, burials, battles, etc.—is constantly referenced in Greek tragedy but is almost never shown, with actors telling us about these happenings instead.

Scholars usually interpret this peculiarity of the genre as a by-product of tragedy being interested in *something else* more than in dynamic physical action—for example, in the importance of words (Goldhill 1986) or in small-scale actions such as arrivals and departures (Taplin 1971). What has gone largely unnoticed is that, rather than simply *ignoring* physical action, tragedy insistently calls attention to its own refusal to render such action visible.

This paper examines the second stasimon of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, which exemplifies one distinctive effect that tragedy can produce by emphatically withholding spectacle. Sung after Theseus hurries away to rescue Oedipus' daughters from Creon's soldiers, the stasimon highlights the chorus' (and thus also our) inability to witness the ensuing battle. At the same time, it systematically replaces spectatorship of physical action with three different kinds of forward-looking utterances: *wishing* (1044-1058), *praying* (1085-1095), and, most strikingly, *prophesying* (1074-1087). By drawing attention to the fact that the chorus

(and we) are being denied access to the offstage chase and battle, the second stasimon underscores a shift from the performance of physical deeds to performance of future-oriented, mantic *logos*.

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Michele Solitario (Göttingen University)

The Politics of Motherhood in Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*

During the Hellenistic period in the Ptolemaic kingdom, women increasingly assumed prominent public roles, particularly as *basilissa* ("queen"). A specific female ideology emerged to legitimize their power as both the king's wife and the mother of future rulers, ensuring dynastic continuity. My paper aims to highlight the expression of this ideology in the depiction of mother figures in Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*, analyzing various sources to reveal the interconnectedness of political propaganda across different media.

1) The depiction of Rhea as the mother of Zeus with a scepter mirrors that of Isis in the *Mammisis* ("birth-houses") at the temple of Isis in Philae. The goddess's actions, cleansing the child and wrapping it in a diaper, reflect ritual practices tied to the ruler's crowning. Offering cloths for diapers symbolized the protection of the child and the renewal of the ruler's power, securing the dynasty under the protection of Isis and Horus.

2) In this hymn, Amalthea, the mothering goat, is introduced for the first time in the extant Greek literature. In Ptolemaic ideology, Arsinoë was linked to Amalthea's *dikeras*—a symbol of fertility and abundance. Callixenus' account of the *Ptolemaia* procession (Ath. 197a) emphasizes the *dikeras* as a key attribute of Arsinoë, a connection confirmed by coins and

statues. This association makes Amalthea's role in Callimachus' hymn, where her milk miraculously nourishes the infant Zeus, especially significant.

An in-depth analysis of the text will not only enhance the understanding of Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*, but also offer new insights into the political, religious, and cultural landscape of the Hellenistic period.

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Harvey Yunis (Rice University)

The Politics of Proof in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*

Chapters one and two of book one of Aristotle's treatise on the *Art of Rhetoric* present in immediate juxtaposition two distinct, mutually incompatible accounts of the artistic means of persuasion. While chapter two argues for three forms of artistic proof – pertinent argument (*logos*), manipulation of the audience's emotions (*pathos*), and establishing the trustworthiness of the speaker (*ethos*) – chapter one maintains only pertinent argument and rejects all other forms of proof for being irrelevant.

While the presence of the two accounts side-by-side in the *Rhetoric* is likely due not to Aristotle himself but to the early redactors of Aristotle's work, the chapter-two account provides the main structuring principle of the rest of the treatise. Instead of attempting to dissolve or otherwise remove the discrepancy, which is the tactic that is usually followed in examining this issue, I argue that the two theories of proof stem from different Aristotelian conceptions of politics, one based on jurisprudence, the other based on democratic deliberation. The two kinds of artistic proof also tend to produce different kinds of persuasion, suitable for

different audiences, occasions, and purposes. Aristotle is unlikely to have been interested in rhetorical techniques without being simultaneously interested in both the nature of the persuasion which the techniques tend to produce and the political contexts in which they find their appropriate use. Getting clear on these points makes it possible to see why Aristotle would have entertained both accounts of rhetorical proof, although the original contexts in which he did so are now obscure, and why the chapter-two account was made into the basis of the rest of the treatise on rhetoric.

2nd Session: Student Session

Rebecca Posner-Hess (PhD candidate, Department of Classics, University of Chicago)

On-Stage Disrobing and Costume Change in the *Oresteia*

This paper argues that gestures of disrobing in Greek tragedy incorporate the mechanics of stage representation into the play and expose to the audience the practical backstage action of costume change. I take as my starting point Rosie Wyles' identification of tragic characters with the material of their costumes and discussion of the on-stage removal of costume pieces as a deconstruction of the character's semiotic representation (Wyles 2011 & 2013). I argue that part of this function lies in the staging of the actor's otherwise-concealed removal of his costume in order to assume the mask and costume of a new character, since each actor played multiple roles in a tetralogy and frequently within a single tragedy. The metatheatrical aspect of on-stage dressing and undressing has been recognized in Old Comedy, where characters make use of disguises within the dramatic universe (e.g. Muecke 1982, Dane 1984, Compton-Engle 2015, Reinke 2019), but it is underappreciated in tragedy outside of the genre-bending dressing scene of the *Bacchae*.

I focus on Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, in which a series of characters prominently remove articles of clothing on stage (Griffith 1988). I argue that these disrobings integrate into the play and the 'dramatic illusion' the beginning of the process of changing costumes and characters that the actor will continue off-stage by removing more costume pieces, including his mask, and by putting on others. They thus trigger the audience's expectation that this character is shortly to

exit and not to return, since his actor is evidently preparing to be deployed in another role. The act of disrobing on stage thus visibly reverses the backstage act of dressing up as a character, an act which has been described as the foundational element of theatre (Muecke 1982, Wyles 2011), by staging the deconstruction and ‘death’ of the dramatic character.

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Dmitry Ezrokhi (PhD student, Department of Classics, Princeton University)

The Perils of “Wellness:” Plato’s Political Critique of Hippocratic *diaita*

Scholarship on Plato’s relationship to newly ascendant “Hippocratic” medicine has traditionally focused on medical theories—their epistemic status, their influence on his natural philosophy, and their role as a paradigmatic *technē*. However, medical practices do more than shape how people conceive of their bodies; they fundamentally influence how individuals care for them. Because such care is inherently laden with assumptions regarding what is valuable and whose authority matters, it bears distinct social and political implications.

To address this neglected dimension, this paper reads Plato’s discussion of *gumnastikē* in *Republic* III (403c–412b) alongside key Hippocratic texts, specifically *Regimen* and Ancient Medicine. By placing these works in dialogue, I argue that Plato offers a sustained critique of contemporary medicine’s central therapeutic innovation: the medicalized regimen (*diaita*).

While Hippocratic authors present *diaita*—covering food, drink, sleep, sex, and exercise—as a key innovation and an invaluable tool for health, Plato identifies it as a source of political

corrosion. For Plato, the problem with medical regimens is their effect on the leisured elite's pursuit of virtue: they allow elites to live idle and indulgent lives without suffering adverse health effects. By mitigating the physical cost of vice, medical regimens enable the elite to trade civic duty for a total, all-consuming devotion to bodily "wellness." Plato thus purposefully subverts the self-perception of contemporary physicians, casting them not as paragons of service to humanity, but as enablers of a leisured elite's abandonment of political service and moral development. Consequently, he advocates for the exclusion of regimen from medical practice. I conclude by showing that this concern resurfaces in *Laws VII*, where Plato grapples with the tension that the leisure necessary for cultivating virtue simultaneously grants the elite the capacity to abdicate their social function entirely—a risk that farmers and craftsmen, driven by necessity, do not face.

Gilad Hesse (MA student, Department of Philosophy, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

“As Far as Possible”: The Model of the Philosopher and Assimilation to God in the *Theaetetus*

At the center of Plato's *Theaetetus* stands the well known digression in which Socrates contrasts the figure of the philosopher with that of the forensic speaker. At the heart of this passage lies the exhortation to escape the evils of the world through “assimilation to God as far as possible” (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν). Scholarship is divided over the nature of this assimilation and its relation to the figure of the philosopher. While the so called otherworldly interpretation understands it as a call to withdraw from the world into abstract intellectual contemplation, the worldly interpretation emphasizes political engagement, yet without offering a satisfactory account of the character types presented in the digression or of the nature of the philosopher's flight, if he is indeed meant to act within the world. Neither approach sits comfortably with the figure of Socrates and the philosophical model he represents. This paper proposes a third interpretation, arguing that the digression articulates a distinction between different kinds of philosophers, as well as between a description of the existing condition and an account of the ideal.

I first argue that the philosopher presented at the beginning of the digression, the antithesis of the sophistic forensic speaker, is depicted as ridiculous and politically inept, and does not

represent a philosophical ideal or the figure enjoined to assimilate to God. I further suggest that this portrayal is parodic in character and fundamentally distinct from the philosophical model exemplified by Socrates.

I then present textual evidence that may support a division of the digression into two parts corresponding to the relation between what is and what ought to be. On this reading, the required flight is not a withdrawal from the world or the city, but a rejection of both character types depicted in the digression. Drawing on the narrative context of the dialogue as a whole, I argue that the figure called to assimilate to God is not the detached philosopher, but rather the philosophical model instantiated by Socrates, one that combines intellectual activity with moral action within the civic sphere through philosophical discourse rather than direct political action.

In conclusion, I suggest that assimilation to God does not entail withdrawal from the world, but the adoption of a model of action analogous to divine activity as presented elsewhere in Plato's works.

Ella Perry (MA student, Department of General History, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

Female Bacchic Leadership and the Making of Religious Role Models

Female leadership in high-arousal Bacchic cults is well-attested in ancient sources. While classical scholarship has acknowledged the ecstatic nature of Bacchic ritual practice, the specific function and social significance of female Bacchic leaders have remained underexamined. This presentation argues that some bacchantes functioned as role models within their communities: paradigmatic examples whose leadership, public honors, and lasting commemoration demonstrated what constituted authoritative religious practice in the Bacchic context.

The argument proceeds in three analytical stages. First, I examine epigraphic, literary, and iconographic evidence from the Classical and Hellenistic periods, identifying a recurring pattern in both the representation of exemplary Bacchic behavior and the commemoration of specific leaders. Second, I analyze the ritual context that shaped this exemplarity. The high-arousal nature of Bacchic rituals, characterized by ecstatic dance, music, and collective performance, required active experiential guidance rather than formal officiating. Attention to

the ritual dynamics clarifies the conditions under which reliable leadership became both necessary and meaningful. Third, drawing on cognitive and anthropological approaches to religion, I examine how intense ritual experiences affect mechanisms of memory, authority formation, and the transmission of religious norms. These methodological tools help explain why female leaders in Bacchic cults could become enduring reference points within their communities and why their actions and commemoration functioned as models of legitimate religious conduct.

Leoran Vizner (PhD candidate, Archaeology Department, Tel Aviv University)

Reading Ovid on the Wall: Myth, Sexual Violence, and Meaning in Pompeian Domestic Painting

The lecture explores the dynamic relationship between Ovidian myth and Pompeian wall painting in the first century CE, asking how elite Roman viewed narratives of sexual violence across text and image within the domestic sphere. Rather than treating literature and painting as parallel or illustrative traditions, the lecture argues that they functioned as mutually reinforcing media embedded in shared cultural, legal, and spatial frameworks.

Focusing on well-attested myths such as Io, Daphne, Leda, and Europa, the lecture highlights how Ovid's *Metamorphoses* echoed and created narrative characterized by divine pursuit, silenced female voices, and asymmetrical power relations. These same narratives appear frequently in Pompeian houses, where their placement within reception rooms, cubicula, and visual axes shaped how they were encountered and interpreted.

By briefly juxtaposing Ovidian literary strategies, such as focalization on male actors and aestheticized transformation, with the compositional and spatial dominance often granted to male figures in wall painting, the lecture demonstrates how sexual violence myths were normalized through repetition across media. The domestic context is crucial: paintings were viewed not privately but within socially charged settings of hospitality, hierarchy, and elite self-fashioning.

The lecture concludes by suggesting that Ovidian myth and Pompeian painting together formed part of a broader ideological environment shaped by Augustan moral discourse, in

which narratives of coercion could simultaneously warn against excess and reaffirm patriarchal control. This interdisciplinary lens reveals myth not as decoration, but as an active agent in Roman cultural consciousness.

Marie-Laure Reborra (PhD student, Aix-Marseille University)

My daughter, you have acted like Rebecca (Midrash Eikhah Rabbah 1,19): Portraits of Girls in Rabbinic Sources and Inscriptions from the Jewish Communities of Rome and Venosa (2nd-6th centuries CE)

Thanks to the deep interest in gender studies, more studies have been dedicated to the place and role of women in the ancient world¹; as for the Jewish world in Antiquity, the works by Tal Ilan in the 90s were something of a trailblazer, followed by Hagith Sivan². While following this path, this paper intends to explore specifically the depiction of young girls, women-to-be but not women yet, in rabbinic sources, especially in the Yerushalmi, *baraitot* from the Bavli and the Midrashim, as well as in overlooked epigraphic evidence from the Jewish catacombs of Rome and Venosa, which count the highest rate of epitaphs for girls.

Indeed, although they are less present in those sources than their male counterparts, young girls pop up in some instances and are given enough importance to be recorded, be it through their names or their symbolic role in rabbinic *aggadot*. For instance, out of 98 epitaphs from the Jewish catacombs of Rome, 35 commemorate girls, including a toddler, whereas, out of 13 from those of Venosa, seven honour female children. If many epitaphs are brief, some of them, like the one of Faustina in Venosa, praised by rabbis, let us understand how significant commemorating some girls may have been, because of the status of their family. In rabbinic sources, we encounter witty girls interacting with rabbis and demonstrating wisdom, so to be compared with matriarchs, which shows their inclusion into the Jewish people.

¹ See recently A. M. G. Capomacchia, E. Zocca (dir.), *Eroiche fanciulle, sante bambine, cattive ragazze*, 2024 and *Bambine: Percezione del femminile ed elaborazione di modelli fra Antichità e Medioevo*, 2025.

² T. Ilan, *Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*, repr. 1996 and *Mine and Yours are Hers. Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature*, 1997; H. Sivan, *Dinah's Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity*, 2002.

We shall compare those examples with literary and epigraphic portraits of girls from ‘pagan’ and Christian sources to identify the social and religious dynamics behind those rare depictions of girls as worth of being remembered or even models.

3rd Session: *Epigraphica Israelica*: Marking the Publication of *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae VI (CIIP)*

The *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* (CIIP) is a major multilingual epigraphical project, carried out in close collaboration between Israeli and German scholars and based in Jerusalem and Cologne. Initiated in 1999, the project reached its completion in April 2026 with the publication of Volume VI, comprising the inscriptions from the Negev together with addenda to all previous volumes. The proposed session, titled *Epigraphica Israelica*, is intended to mark both the publication of CIIP VI and the completion of the CIIP project in its current form. It will be devoted to studies in Israeli epigraphy—that is, research on epigraphical material from Israel and its neighbouring regions, as well as epigraphical studies conducted by Israeli scholars.

Ofer Pogorelsky (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Presentation of the CIIP Project

A short presentation of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* (CIIP) project, from its inception in 1999 to its completion in 2026, comprising six volumes published in ten books. The presentation will provide an overview of the published volumes and offer a ‘glimpse behind the curtain’ of the CIIP’s work, carried out collaboratively by teams in Jerusalem and Cologne, Germany. The presentation will also address the question of the ‘future of the CIIP’, namely the continuation of the work through the newly established epigraphical laboratory at the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. If time permits, a few cases will be highlighted in which CIIP investigations of specific inscriptions have produced valuable—and occasionally surprising—insights.

Sofia Andreeva (Hebrew University of Jerusalem; ERC Project ‘Local Law under Rome’)

Charles Clermont-Ganneau: The Scholar and the Detective of Antiquities

In every volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, we repeatedly rely on the publications and copies of Charles Clermont-Ganneau, whose squeezes, facsimiles, and editions still underlie modern epigraphic work. Few figures have shaped our understanding of the inscriptions of the southern Levant as profoundly as he has.

Charles Clermont-Ganneau (1846–1923) was trained in Arabic and Semitic philology, mastering Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and several European languages. Entering the French diplomatic service, he served in Jerusalem as dragoman-chancellor (1867–1871), a position that required linguistic versatility, cultural mediation, and constant negotiation with Ottoman authorities and local communities. This post allowed him to pursue what soon became his intellectual vocation: the study of inscriptions. During these formative years he developed a deep fascination with epigraphy, gathering texts, making squeezes, and examining every available stone with extraordinary attentiveness: he produced dozens of scholarly publications – editions of inscriptions, archaeological and topographical studies, linguistic analyses, and commentary on major discoveries including the Temple Warning inscription, the Royal Steward inscription, and the Mesha Stele.

Clermont-Ganneau also gained a formidable reputation as the foremost expert in the detection of forgeries. He exposed fabricated Moabite objects, unmasked multiple spurious inscriptions, and famously identified the Shapira *Deuteronomy manuscript* as fraudulent. His *Fraudes archéologiques* codified his methods and became a foundational guide for authenticating antiquities.

At the same time, he played a major role in building museum collections, advising the Louvre, procuring inscriptions and antiquities, and shaping the early composition of European Near Eastern holdings. His career illuminates the entangled worlds of diplomacy, scholarship, collecting, and the antiquities market.

Reassessing Clermont-Ganneau clarifies how our epigraphic sources were collected, authenticated, and transmitted, and why his legacy still shapes *CIIP* and modern scholarship.

Michal Bar Asher-Sigal (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev) & **Jacob Ashkenazi** (Kinneret Academic College)

Public Scripture, Public Law: Biblical Verses on Walls and the Making of Norms in Late Antiquity

This Paper examines how biblical verses displayed in public spaces: in inscriptions, mosaics, lintels, artifacts, and even performative settings, functioned as a medium for law, theology, and communal identity in Late Antiquity. The project was built in two phases. First, a construction of a new, structured database of 286 verse-bearing inscriptions (3rd–8th c. CE) from Egypt to the Western Mediterranean and the Levant. Each item was mapped by verse, book, language, findspot, placement, and date.

The second phase examined this database alongside rabbinic and Christian writers who dealt with these very same verses. This raises a core set of questions: Is there a connection between these two worlds? Between the verses that appear in public space, on inscriptions, mosaics, artifacts, and performances, and the verses that preoccupied ancient writers. Do the selections overlap? Are the same verses that rabbis and Church Fathers debated in their legal and theological texts also the ones that recur on synagogue mosaics or Christian inscriptions? Or do these two spheres, public display and literary theology, operate according to different principles?

The central question guiding the study remains: which parts of divine Scripture, which specific verses, captured the imagination of ancient readers? Why these verses and not others? What made them so relevant, so controversial, or so useful?

This database allows us to trace how Scripture circulated between public display, legal discourse, and lived practice. By comparing the inscriptions with rabbinic texts and early Christian writings, we can ask: were these verses merely echoes of debates already taking place in legal and theological circles? Or did their public display, Scripture literally written on the wall, generate new debates of its own?

Avner Ecker, Oren Gutfeld, and Michal Haber (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Visions in the Desert: A Newly Discovered Paraphrase of Psalms in a Monastic Inscription from Hyrcania

A newly identified Greek inscription from the monastic complex at Hyrcania enriches our understanding of devotional practices in the Judean Desert during Late Antiquity. Painted in red and preceded by a cross, the nine-line text preserves a personalized paraphrase of Psalm 86 (LXX 85), interwoven with echoes of Deuteronomy 6.13 and related biblical formulae of exclusive worship. The inscription reflects the spiritual interiority of its composer—likely a monk—who shaped a private prayer by adapting scriptural language to personal supplication. Its orthography displays characteristic features aligning with broader patterns attested in Late Roman Palestine and suggesting a Semitic-speaking writer. Paleographic traits, together with the archaeological context and the monastery's known foundation in 492 CE, support a date in the sixth century. This inscription contributes important evidence for the lived religious experience of desert monasticism.

4th Session: Archaeology and Art in the Eastern Mediterranean

Alan Shapiro (Johns Hopkins University)

Political Personifications on Athenian Vases

This paper, in memory of Martin Ostwald (1922-2010), who contributed so much to Classical Studies in Israel in the last years of his life, is inspired by his lifelong interest in Greek political vocabulary: *nomos*, *anankê*, *autonomia*, *oligarchia* (all four, titles of books by Ostwald) among many other words. To complement his lexical interest, I survey a small group of Attic red-figure vases that render political concepts in human (always female) form to create early experiments in visual allegory.

These concepts include Dike (Justice) struggling with Adikia (Injustice) on a vase of the late sixth century that may comment on the fall of the Peisistratid tyranny; *Eunomia* (Good Government), *Eukleia* (Good Repute), *Harmonia* and others in the retinue of Aphrodite (in her civic role as Pandemos) or Apollo (god of *nomos*) on vases of the late fifth century, at the height of the Peloponnesian War; and *Soteria* (Salvation), with other personifications, in the

story of Athena and Erichthonios, the divine child who embodied the hopes of the Athenians in wartime.

Sonia Klinger (University of Haifa)

Bronze Dedications from the Ancient Greek Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth

Pliny stated at the beginning of his book on bronzes that Corinthian bronze is more valuable than silver and almost more so than gold. He also stated that Corinthian bronze is the most highly praised bronze known from earlier times (*NH* 34.1, 34.6). As pointed out by Carol C. Mattusch,³ Pliny's sources were not always quite accurate and the debate continues about defining the essence of Corinthian bronze and a Corinthian style in art. Concomitantly, our knowledge of Corinthian bronze is expanding due to excavations that have uncovered some Greek and Roman metalworking establishments that produced small-scale finds and from numerous objects found in various Corinthian sites and stored at the Corinth Archaeological Museum, many of which were published by Gladys R. Davidson.⁴ To these we can now add over 340 unpublished bronze finds from the Greek Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth, the main focus of this paper. These are finds from the excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies in the Sanctuary, directed by Ronald S. Stroud and Nancy Bookidis between 1961 to 1975 and in 1994, all also stored in the Corinth Museum. Following a brief review of the Sanctuary's archaeological and chronological contexts, I will describe the various types of bronze finds and their possible dates and methods of manufacture. I will then present a select group in further detail. In reviewing them, I will compare them with some typical Corinthian types and explore their possible associations with the Sanctuary to amplify our understanding of the deities' identities, their votaries, and the circumstances that may have driven individuals to dedicate them in the Sanctuary.

³ Carol C. Mattusch, "Corinthian Bronze: Famous but Elusive," in *Corinth, the Centenary: 1896-1996* (Corinth XX), ed. C. K. Williams II and N. Bookidis, Princeton, 2003, pp. 219-232.

⁴ Gladys R. Davidson, *The Minor Objects* (Corinth XII), Princeton, 1952.

Rivka Gersht (Tel Aviv University) & **Peter Gendelman** (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Eros in Caesarea Maritima

Unlike Pompeii, Caesarea ruins yielded no erotic mural paintings, brothels or phallic signboards. However, the existence of brothels and prostitution in Roman Caesarea are known from written sources (e.g. Josephus Flavius and the Jerusalem Talmud). Additional clues on the role eroticism played in the life of the inhabitants of Roman Caesarea are provided by other structures than brothels and by a large number of artifacts.

Throughout the Roman Empire *tabernae*, markets, circuses, amphitheaters and bath-houses were places where adultery took place and prostitutes offered their services. Panthokakos or Penthokakos, a late third or early fourth century Caesarean pimp, hired prostitutes, decorated the theater, put the prostitutes' clothes in the bathhouse, clapped and danced, stroked cymbals or beat a drum before them, but refused to employ a Jewish married woman, whose husband was in jail, as prostitute (Jerusalem Talmud, Ta'anit 1:4).

Among the erotic artifacts are oil lamps, found in large quantity in a variety of contexts: private dwellings, burials, entertainment facilities, *tabernae* and public baths. The repertory offers a number of intercourse postures familiar from Pompeian wall-paintings and other Roman works of art, as-well-as from literary sources (e.g. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*). Among the sex positions are the 'Lioness' and the '*Venus pendula conversa*'. Fragment of erotic mold from one of the Dioscuri Domus' shops indicates that the demand for erotic depictions necessitated local production. Phallic objects are few, but along with the images of Priapos and Hermaphroditos—each with erect phallus—they ward off the 'evil eye' and promised good fortune.

The paper will deal with all of the above mentioned issues; will point to locations wherein the Caesareans could enjoy all that Eros could offer, and an effort will be made to offer some insights regarding the significance of eroticism in the life and afterlife of the Caesarea inhabitants.

Emmanuel Nantet (University of Haifa)

The Late Byzantine Fortifications of Tiberias: The Lake-Side Extension of the City Wall

The city wall of Tiberias constitutes one of the most significant architectural achievements of the Byzantine period in the city. According to Procopius of Caesarea, its construction is traditionally attributed to the reign of Justinian I (r. 527–565 CE) (*De Aedificiis* 5.9.21). The fortification, however, enclosed the settlement on only three sides, leaving the lake shore unprotected and necessitating the construction of an extension in the form of a jetty prolonging the line of the wall into the lake.

Archaeological excavations carried out at the extremity of this fortification have provided a rare opportunity to document the design, construction, and function of this lake-side extension, which was conceived by the Byzantine authorities as a defensive response to Sasanian and early Muslim threats. The investigation combined stratigraphic excavation, architectural analysis, and the systematic recording of construction materials and techniques in a highly dynamic context, alternately submerged by the lake and exposed, which required constant methodological adaptation.

The excavation of the jetty revealed a construction technique based on the use of hydraulic mortar poured into wooden formworks. Substantial remains of these formworks were uncovered during the 2025 excavation season, allowing for a detailed reconstruction of the building process. This evidence offers, for the first time for the Byzantine period, direct archaeological documentation of a specialized method for underwater construction, extending well-known techniques employed in early Imperial maritime harbour works into a Late Antique defensive context.

Second Day, June 4th, 2026

5th Session: Classical Archaeology around the Mediterranean

Ioannis Nakas (University of Haifa)

The Harbours of the Greco-Roman World as Heterotopias. Plato vs Foucault

Harbours have always been exceptional spaces and loci of human experience and interaction. Standing on the borderline between the land and the sea and between the known and the unknown, they are by definition spaces where people meet and exchange goods, technology, and culture. This renders them, in the terminology coined by Michel Foucault, “heterotopias” or “other spaces”, mentally or physically defined passageways, sites of diversified experience, and even deviation. As such, Plato and Aristotle, who expressed their disdain concerning the nature of harbours as meeting places, perceived them. This paper aims to explore the possible role of the harbours of the Greco-Roman antiquity as “heterotopias”, focusing on a combinative study of ancient texts, archaeological remains, and modern parallels.

Jessica Schellig (Tel Aviv University)

The Organization of Coin Production of Akko-Ptolemais During the Roman Period

Following their integration into the Roman Empire, the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean continued to issue their own currency, thereby perpetuating a centuries-long tradition of coinage production. The same applies to Akko-Ptolemais, which began issuing provincial coinage under Mark Antony in 39 BC and continued to do so until the reign of Gallienus (253–268 CE).

Like most cities in the province of Syria, Ptolemais issued sporadic bronze coins to meet local demand for low-value currency. There has been a long-standing debate among numismatists about the extent to which the cities themselves were involved in producing their own currency. As most municipalities, including Ptolemais, did not continuously emit coins, establishing a permanent mint might not have been considered necessary, and cities may have opted for cooperative production models or relied on centralized or itinerant workshops. Therefore, individuals external to the civic administration may have influenced the creation of

provincial coinage, thereby determining stylistic and potentially iconographic decisions. This is an especially interesting question in the case of Akko-Ptolemais, which was granted the title of 'colonia' under Claudius and has depicted a close relationship with the Roman authorities on its coins ever since. The presentation will therefore focus on whether the colony itself was solely responsible for producing its own coins and imagery, or if this can be contextualized within a broader shared production framework.

Adi Erlich (University of Haifa)

Two Heads are better than one: Dioskouroi and Other Twins in Hellenistic Maresha

Maresha in the Judean foothills was the main city of Idumea during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The city flourished in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, until its conquest by the Hasmoneans in 112 BCE. The city was inhabited by a mosaic of peoples, mostly Idumeans but also Phoenicians, Arabians, Greek/Macedonians and others.

During the excavations of the late Amos Kloner (on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority), which continue to the present under Ian Stern (currently on behalf of the Zinman Institute of Archaeology at the University of Haifa), thousands of terracotta figurines and other minor art artifacts were discovered in the city. Some of the figurines depict deities of Greek, Ptolemaic and other origins, a makeup typical of the Hellenistic Levant.

Among those deities, the Greek twin gods Dioskouroi stand out, as they are not common elsewhere in the coproplastic repertoire of the Hellenistic period, and parallels come mainly from Cyprus and Egypt, emphasizing their Ptolemaic influence. These astral twins also appear on bullae from the archive from Maresha, recently discovered in Stern's excavations, and their typical cap, pilos, appears elsewhere on coins and other elements in the region. However, in the Maresha figurines, there are also double heads on pillars, which may point to the importance of twins in the local culture. In my talk I will discuss these examples, and offer an interpretation for the role of twins and their mythology in Maresha, in light of its history and Idumean culture.

Mechael Osband (University of Haifa & Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee)

Public Buildings and Their Archaeological Visibility in Rural Golan During the Roman Period

This paper addresses the intriguing phenomenon of the relatively limited visible remains of public buildings in rural Golan settlements during the Roman period. Drawing on data from archaeological surveys and excavations dated to the Roman period across the region, the study explores the Golan within a broader comparative framework that includes neighboring areas, where clearer evidence for public architecture or at least epigraphic testimony attesting to such structures is more common. It is argued that a reassessment of sites dated exclusively to the Roman period reveals a greater number of indicators of public construction than has generally been assumed in previous scholarship, even though in many cases these remains are less architecturally prominent than those associated with the Byzantine period. The presentation further explores the possibility that certain public structures were deliberately dismantled, either for reuse or for transformation in later phases.

Ayala Zilberstein (Israel Antiquities Authority)

Hellenistic Jerusalem, 'First Wall', the Akra, and Seleucid Instability

This lecture critically re-examines the conventional chronology for the construction of Jerusalem's "First Wall" and the related westward urban expansion. The dominant scholarly view dates the wall's construction after the Hasmonean conquest and demolition of the Seleucid fortress, the Akra, in 141 BCE, interpreting it as a post-liberation act.

In this lecture, I seek to challenge this consensus, proposing an earlier, more nuanced, and gradual timeline. My thesis centers on the premise that profound internal instability within the Seleucid court during the mid-second century BCE created a strategic vacuum that Jonathan and Simon Maccabeus expertly exploited. This political context suggests the Hasmonean leaders often acted, at least initially, with a degree of Seleucid mandate.

Consequently, it will be argued that the initiative to re-fortify the Western Hill, beginning with the rehabilitation of the ancient wall line, likely commenced prior to 141 BCE, potentially under Simon or Jonathan, even while the Seleucid garrison still occupied the Akra. This initial

restoration may have served as a mutually beneficial act, securing the expanding city for order and defense under continued Seleucid suzerainty. The later addition of specialized defensive towers represents a subsequent, tactical phase.

In conclusion, this presentation demonstrates that the westward expansion was an incremental process, with its initial phase driven by Seleucid weakness and the Hasmonean brothers' astute diplomatic leverage and accumulating auctoritas, possibly achieved with some measure of Seleucid cooperation.

Arleta Kowalewska & Michael Eisenberg (University of Haifa)

The Elders House at Hippos of the Decapolis

The 2023–2024 excavations at Hippos, a Graeco-Roman city above the Sea of Galilee, revealed a unique mosaic floor that was part of a building at the junction of the city's main street (*decumanus maximus*) with one of the *cardines*. Only a part of the mosaic has been preserved to our times, yet it stands in excellent condition with a Christian-motifs-medallion filled by an inscription and surrounding depictions of birds, flora, and wine vessels. With hardly anything else left of the building besides the mosaic, the inscription – "Peace be with the elders" – is the most telling evidence to speculate on the nature of this space and its function. We propose interpreting it as a house for the elders of the city (γηροκομειον). Houses for the care of the Christian elders are attested by literary and epigraphic sources, mainly in connection to cities, e.g. in Constantinople, and in the *Palaestina* provinces, at Jerusalem, founded by private donors and by empress Aelia Eudocia. The fairly precise dating of the building at Hippos, indicated by archaeology to the end of the 4th–beginning of the 5th century CE at the latest, would make it the earliest physically known establishment of this kind in the Roman world and generally one of the earliest testaments to this institution in Christian times.

6th Session: Law and Literature

Juan Lewis (The Open University, Scotland, UK; SLaVEgents ERC-Project, IMS-FORTH, Rethymno, Crete, Greece)

Undeclared Nations, or Why Declaring the Ethnic Origin of Slaves was not a Legal Obligation

Unlike slave vendors in other slave societies, it is broadly held that Roman slave mongers had to declare the ethnic origin of slaves they sold lest they faced restitution of the slaves in question. This obligation, however, is not found in the text of the *curule aediles* preserved in *Dig.* 21.1.1.1, nor in *Gel.* 4.2.1, but in a comment by Ulpian to the edict (*Dig.* 21.1.31.21). In this paper I will argue that the original edict never envisaged such obligation, which never became a proper legal requirement, as establishing the ethnic origin of slaves was too often not an easy feat. Unsurprisingly, analysis of the extant documents of slave sales will show that not all vendors complied with this requirement, and not all buyers cared much about it either. The *natio* of the slave was often not declared, and Roman slave sales followed patterns found in other Eastern Mediterranean and Levantine slave societies, as comparison of slave sale contracts shows. Conversely, every other condition of sale decreed by the edict was always fulfilled. The reason why this was the case can be explained by both the importance of slave breeding and the complexity of the Mediterranean slave market and its trade routes, which would have made establishing such legal obligation either a negative incentive detrimental to vendor-purchaser trust, or a pointless exercise. Rather than a legal mandate, Ulpian's comment was alluding to a merely a customary practice, spawned by Roman tastes and preferences with regard to certain ethnic groups of slaves, and which led the jurist to read a marketing strategy as a legally binding provision. Scholarship confusion on this matter stems from a conflation of substantive law and jurists' legal opinions, as well as from a view of Roman slavery as distinctive from other ancient slaveries.

Orit Malka (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

**Rethinking the "Testimonies of Dionysus" (Διονύσου μαρτυρήσιον; Hom. *Od.* XI.325):
Between Testimony, Oath, and Curse**

In Homer's *Odyssey* XI.325, the poet briefly alludes to the myth of Ariadne and Theseus. Although Theseus desired Ariadne, he could not have her because of what the text calls the "testimony of Dionysus": Διονύσου μαρτυρήσιον. This expression has long posed a hermeneutical problem: what does "testimony" mean in this mythological context, and how is Dionysus' action to be understood? Later versions of the myth attempt to resolve the difficulty by introducing a curse imposed by Dionysus upon Ariadne, but scholarship has not sufficiently clarified how the notion of μαρτυρία could give rise to, or be conceptually connected with, a curse.

This paper proposes a new explanation of the use of μαρτυρία as curse in Homer, based on the close conceptual relationship between testimony, oath, and curse in Ancient Near Eastern legal and religious cultures. In previous works, I have shown that in biblical Hebrew the terminology of witness and testimony is closely linked to the semantic field of swearing and the imposition of an oath. This conclusion was based on close attention to the role attributed to witnesses in the legal structure that constitutes a valid oath—a structure formed as a conditional curse and shared by Ancient Near Eastern cultures as well as Greek and Latin cultures. Thus, arguably, this legal perspective has the potential to also illuminate the use of witness vocabulary in Greek sources. The verb μαρτύρομαι and its derivative forms are frequently used in early Greek texts within the semantic field of adjuration and the administration of sworn obligations. Significantly, an early occurrence of μαρτυρία in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (219–225) occupies the semantic space between testimony and oath. The paper thus suggests that the legal culture linking Greek tradition with ancient Israel and the ancient Near East can provide the background for early Greek uses of the term μαρτυρία, which range from testimony to oath and curse.

7th Session: Keynote Lecture

Heinz-Günther Nesselrath (University of Göttingen)

From Pleasure Girls to Political Leaders: The ‘Evolution’ of Women in Aristophanes

A chronological survey of Aristophanes' extant comedies reveals a remarkable evolution of women figures in these plays. In the plays of the 420s BCE women either play only a role as prostitutes appearing as a “reward” for the comic hero (*Acharnians*) or other prominent (and mainly male figures) (*Wasps*, *Peace*), or they have no role at all (*Knights*, *Clouds*). Women first play more prominent roles in the two plays of the year 411: in *Thesmophoriazusae*, they prove to be formidable opponents to Euripides' in-law and Euripides himself, and the eponymous heroine of Lysistrata even grows into an impressive leadership role, bringing peace to a hitherto male-oriented world of war. The culmination point of women's evolution is reached in *Ecclesiazusae* (of 392 or 391), with women under Praxagora's leadership taking control of the Athenian state. The paper will trace this development and also try to give an answer to the question what or who inspired Aristophanes to develop his women roles in such a way.

8th Session: Jewish Culture and Classical Reception

Daniela Dueck (Bar Ilan University)

From Athens to Jerusalem: The Hebrew Reception of Thucydides

The reception of Thucydides in Israeli culture is an interesting case study for what happens to a classical text when it crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries. In my lecture, I will examine the characteristics of the Hebrew translation of the "History of the Peloponnesian War". The analysis focuses on E.E. Halevi's 1959 Hebrew translation and examines how the translator's Rabbinic background influenced his translation and his interpretive approach. Through textual analysis, I will demonstrate how the translator incorporated verbal choices, cultural connections, and interpretations that derive directly from the world of concepts found in the Beit Midrash. In this way, we will see that Thucydides' historiography was made accessible within an Israeli cultural framework through a distinctly Jewish interpretive approach.

Donna Shalev (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Γυμναστική and μουσική at Alkinoos' "tish": Scenes from *Odyssey* 8 through a Yiddish Lens

Homer's *Odyssey*, translated directly from Greek by Moshe Petschennik (Warsaw 1937), offers a new and little-explored dimension to the rich itinerary of the reception of Homer through translation from one Indo-European language (Ancient Greek) to another (Modern Yiddish). On the fascinating linguistic level the translation is *prima facie* direct, yet in fact involves interesting levels of interference.

The direct translation of Homer from Greek into Yiddish reflects interference such as: effects of Homeric *Kunstsprache*; traces of influence of the canonical translation by the Romantic poet Voss (1781) into a form of German which he tailored to the heroic, poetic source, and continually revised; how the translator acclimatizes notions and motifs typifying heroic Greek *paideia*— particularly salient in *Odyssey* 8, encapsulating at least two core elements of *paideia*, and how he acclimatizes epic literary conventions, to Eastern European Jewish cultural ideals, to oral and written narrative and poetic traditions, and to a kaleidoscope of registers, linguistic influences (including Hebrew) and to shifting cultural frames of reference.

This short talk will introduce: (a) what we know about Homeric works rendered into Yiddish, and the respective translators of a small part of the *Iliad* and the entire *Odyssey*; (b) a bird's-eye view of *loci classici* in *Odyssey* 8; (c) a close reading of select passages from this bird's-eye view, with comments on some tactics, and creative solutions employed by Petschennik to render

- formal features in the original (e.g. compound adjectives, frames for speech, focalizing particles, nuance of aspect and mood)
- register, affect and dialogue technique in character speech, with special reference to the animated exchanges and Odysseus' skill in logos.

- culturally loaded terms (e.g. deliberate application of Hebrew-based expressions and turns of phrase, viz. Germanized ones) – especially treatment of the terminology describing athletic competition, music and dance.

(d) in closing remarks I will question the level of resonance of Voss' German *Odyssey* on Petshennik's Yiddish (briefly relating it with the resonance of Voss' *Iliad* on the Yiddish of the translator of *Iliad* 9.1-304, Max Weinreich), and a summary of Petshennik's nuanced grasp and treatment of some hallmark features of the original, among those listed above.

Time permitting, I will end with a brief contextualization of the Yiddish turn to translating the Classics within the broader Modernist turn in another culture which experienced a revival leading to translations of Homer.

Giacomo Loi (Azrieli Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Haifa)

Competing Antiquities: Jewish Temporality and the Destabilization of the Genealogy of Classical Reception

This paper argues that the inclusion of Jewish culture fundamentally transforms the landscape of Classical Reception studies by challenging the models of “genealogy” and “belatedness” that have underpinned the field. While reception is usually predicated on a vertical, genealogical trajectory, Jewish culture destabilizes this model through its appropriation strategy—which I term the “priority strategy.” Rooted in the apologetics of Jewish Hellenistic authors, this Jewish strategy posits Jewish culture itself not as an assimilator of the Greco-Roman world, but as its competitor, characterized by its temporal priority and, therefore, understood as the ultimate, hidden source of the philosophical wisdom and cultural-literary tradition of classical antiquity.

By briefly tracing a lineage of “temporal competition” through three main texts, from antiquity, the early modern era, and contemporary times respectively, (1) Aristoboulos of Alexandria's fragments on the theft of philosophy, (2) Yehuda de' Sommi's apparently revolutionary claim of theater as a Jewish tradition, and (3) Shaul Tchernichowsky's translations of Homer as a “Semitic” text, this study demonstrates how Jewish reception

reframes classical antiquity as a “relative, competing antiquity.” This perspective positions the classical world as a “proximate Other” rather than an idealized, distant origin. In this framework, not only does the Jewish experience pride itself on a narrative of survival that outlasts the “ruins” of Athens and Rome but also allows us to re-read many instances of Jewish classical reception as predicated on a purported priority of Jewish culture.

Ultimately, this paper moves beyond the essentialist “Athens and Jerusalem” binary to explore how Jewish temporality activates mechanisms of comparison, competition, and appropriation, thereby moving from a singular lineage toward a landscape of “competing classicisms.” This shift inserts itself in global efforts to complicate the directionality of reception: it forces a critical re-evaluation of the ideological foundations of classicism itself.