

## *A Proletarian Classics?*

**An online workshop, October 23-24, 2021**

The [Brave New Classics](#) steering committee would like to invite expressions of interest and contributions (abstracts proposing 15 minute papers) on the relationship between ancient Greek and Roman culture and world communism from 1917. The workshop will be hosted by the University of St Andrews with short panels and discussion sessions held online over the weekend of 23-24 October 2021. Expressions of interest welcome any time and the deadline for abstracts is 1st June, 2021.

Associated institutions:

- **Classical Reception Studies Network**
- **University of St Andrews**
- **University of Ljubljana**
- **Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw**

Over the past decade thanks to the collaborative industry of colleagues based in Central and Eastern Europe (especially [David Movrin](#) and [Elżbieta Olechowska](#)) much light has been shed on the relationship between the study of Greek and Roman classics and European communism. This activity has taken the form of several international conferences and resulted in the edited volumes *Classics and Communism* (2013) and *Classics and Class* (2016). More recently ancient theatre and European communism has been the subject of an international conference and a third collected edition *Classics and Communism in Theatre* (2019).

Furthermore, *A People’s History of Classics* (2020) has shown glimpses of the creative influence of Soviet communism on several scholars, writers and artists, who worked with classical antiquity in Britain.

Whilst the discipline of Classics (esp. the study of ancient Greek and Latin) suffered under the Soviet and Soviet-inspired regimes, in other and sometimes surprising ways classics (as cultural activity surrounding the ideas, images, texts and other remains of ancient Greece and Rome) can be seen to have flourished both within and beyond the academy, e.g. classical translation and Marxist/Leninist ancient history and archaeology thrived in certain areas.

The confluence of technological advances and increased leisure time in the 20th century (not to mention the concentration of effort within the USSR on creating proletarian culture) also meant that cultural participation burgeoned, and this included engagements with ancient Greek and Roman antiquity. The classics (broadly defined) were therefore accessible for the first time to mass audiences and mass readerships, where before they were largely limited, by education and means of access, to wealthy elites, who had nurtured them in the imperial European tradition of the *ancien regime*. The classics did not however necessarily lose their former class-connnotations, even if the franchise was dramatically expanded.

This workshop hopes to explore further the conflicted and complex relationship between classics and communism. How were the classical texts, images, objects and ideas received by the people under the influence of communism? How did Soviet ideology change the experience of ‘the classics’ both inside and beyond the Soviet Union and its satellites? We are interested therefore in “popular classics” (however doubtful we may be about this term’s aptness), including but not limited to historical fiction, translated and adapted (etc.) poetry and prose, drama, mass spectacle, film, animation, TV, radio, printed ephemera, children’s literature and popular reference works. We would be particularly interested to hear from colleagues with a view on classics and communism outside of Europe, e.g. in Africa, Asia, Australasia, South and Central America and the US, as well as those working on the reception of the classics in the Baltic and South-Western regions of the former USSR. More interrogative approaches to the subject would also be welcome, e.g. papers that examine the relationship between the classics and communist hegemonies and counter-hegemonies.

Our objective is to bring together scholars from all career stages for discussion and ultimately to produce a special edition of the international journal *Clotho*. Papers will be pre-circulated and presented in summary at the online event.

Please direct all correspondence to [Henry Stead \(St Andrews\)](#).