

REPORT: ‘CLASSICS HELL’: RE-PRESENTING ANTIQUITY IN MASS CULTURAL MEDIA

‘Classics Hell: Re-Presenting Antiquity in Mass Cultural Media’ took place at the University of Reading on Tuesday, April 17th 2007. The event brought together speakers from UK universities from Edinburgh to Exeter. Topics for discussion included the reception of Classics by mass audiences in cinema, radio, television drama, video games, children’s literature, wargaming, news media, self-published novels, and pornography. The keynote speech by broadcaster and author Bettany Hughes (on communicating antiquity to a mass television audience) was followed by a total of five panels (thirteen papers in total including the keynote speech), plus opening and closing comments from the organisers, Dunstan Lowe and Kim Shahabudin.

The conference attracted approximately 45 participants, including non-classicists, graduate students and professional academics representing nine British universities. The atmosphere was both positive and lively, and where time constraints limited the discussion it was enthusiastically continued over refreshment breaks. In many cases, speakers alluded to one another’s papers; this was felt to indicate that the conference theme of reception in mass cultural media is beginning to cohere as a (refreshingly broad) discourse.

The event was agreed to be a great success, with uniformly positive feedback from participants (both speakers and other attendees). The organisers hope to continue their work on the theme, collating a book based on papers given at the conference at the suggestion of a publishing house. The conference programme and abstracts can be found on the website, accessed via www.rdg.ac.uk/classics/hell/. Any enquiries can be directed to d.m.lowe@rdg.ac.uk or k.shahabudin@rdg.ac.uk.