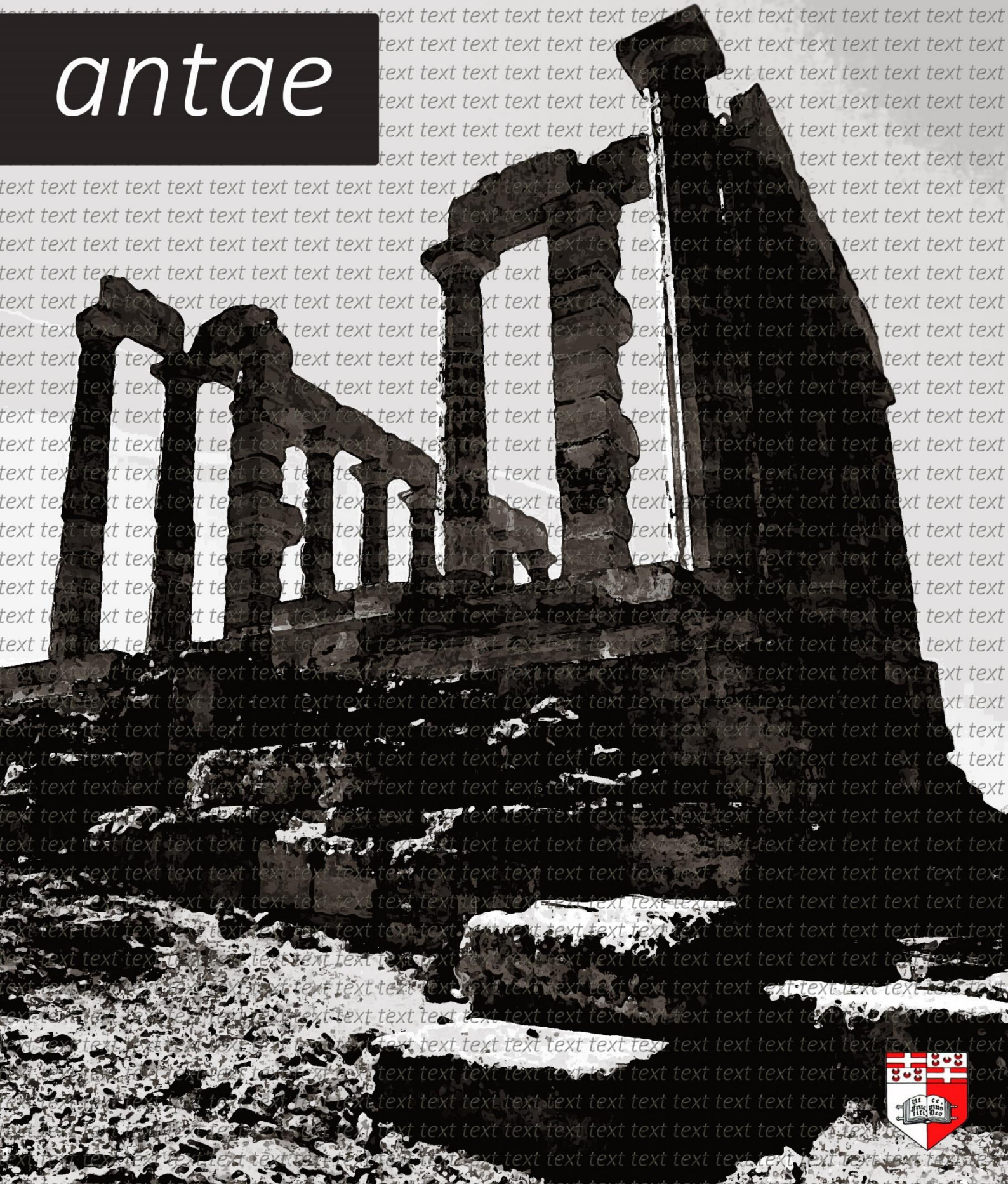


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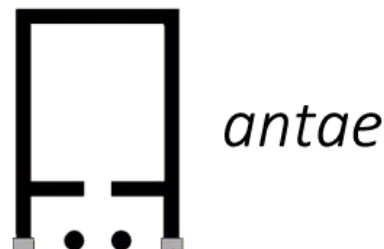
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Editorial

Aaron Aquilina, Irene Scicluna

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antae is an international refereed postgraduate journal aimed at exploring current issues and debates within English Studies, with a particular interest in literature, criticism and their various contemporary interfaces. Set up in 2013 by postgraduate students in the Department of English at the University of Malta, it welcomes submissions situated across the interdisciplinary spaces provided by diverse forms and expressions within narrative, poetry, theatre, literary theory, cultural criticism, media studies, digital cultures, philosophy and language studies. Creative writing is also accepted.

Editorial

Aaron Aquilina, Irene Scicluna

University of Malta

In architectural terms, an anta was a pillar with a square cross-section which flanked one side of the main entrance of a classical Greek temple. These pillars, however, ‘are seldom found except in the plural; because the purpose served by antae required that, in general, two should be erected corresponding to each other’.¹

Jutting out from the side of the walls, antae connote symmetry. They embody the simplicity of the Archaic and Classical architectural styles, and solidify the opposition between left and right, this and that. Columns between the antae, usually of the same width, could only exist pre-determinedly *in antis*, in-between. By its very name, antae is a limiting and limited plural. No temple could have more than two antae defining the temple’s entrance. What the antae demarcate, however, is not the immediate closed space of the temple’s interior, but rather the portico, an open threshold created by the antae themselves outside the main body of the temple. On the other hand, looking at the temple from the outside, one sees the antae as part of the very being of the temple rather than simply being outside of it. Indeed, the function of antae in Greek temples is not merely aesthetic, a particular function of theirs is that of carrying roof timbers in primitive palaces like the Heraeum at Olympia, especially when the walls are made of materials or built in ways which cannot guarantee the integrity of the building.

Antae, clearly, are figures on the borders or borderline figures. They are (at) the end of the walls but also at the beginning or entrance of the temple. They are figures of finality, of definition, but also of commencement.² Etymologically, in fact, the singular form possibly stems from the Latin *ante*, as that which precedes or is before. Inside and outside the classical Greek temple: antae belong to both but also, by necessity, to neither. Antae, it was asserted earlier, is a limited plural. The grammatical undecidability of this sentence is decisive. Antae is. Or should one say, antae are? The inauguration of this journal makes this question not only possible, but also necessary. Antae, a common noun denoting an architectural feature found in a number of temples, starts to function also as a proper noun, identifying this journal and distinguishing it from others. Another instance, then, of antae’s

¹ See *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ed. by W. Smith (London: John Murray, 1842), p. 50.

² Here, the etymology of the word ‘define’ might be kept in mind: from the Latin ‘*dēfinīre* to limit, determine’. See the *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*, ed. by Robert K. Barnhart (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 2008), p. 260.



undecidability: in this case its wavering between, and the impossibility of resting on either the absolute singularity of the proper name or the generalisability of the common noun.

Antae is thus a figure denoting space. And yet, clearly, it also performs complex temporalities, for antae is a word we use now to describe an architectural feature that can only exist as a ghost or ruins from classical times. The word itself, through its etymology, enacts this strange temporality as well. ‘Ante’ means both ‘in front of’ but also ‘chronologically anterior to’, so that that which is ante is both present with and absent from that which it relates to. This disrupts closure and problematises notions of duality as leading to some form of classical unity. In line with this thinking, *Antae* thus welcomes papers and studies which explore, symbolically or otherwise, openings in space and time.

Indeed, as Derek Attridge explains in our interview with him, reading and re-reading texts becomes an issue of spatial and temporal resonances. This first issue thus reflects on the nature of theoretical advances, and their unity with what might at first seem a conservative attempt to adhere to philosophical tradition.

Canonical import and re-visitation are concepts that are explored by Elsa Fiott. Shifting our attention to *Hamlet*, Fiott suggests that the many re-workings of this play have attenuated the audience’s response to it. Furthermore, her essay concerns itself with Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and the disruption of a reactionary stalemate. The second paper, written by Katrin Dautel, deals with the possible performativity produced between the two sturdy and opposing columns of male and female. The characters struggle with their *in antis* existence and, within the dual playgrounds of East and West Berlin, attempt the tearing away from dominant discourses around gender and gender roles. James Corby, in this issue’s third and last article, engages with six separate *idola* which are not really separate at all. Three figures per tableau, designed by Dustin Cauchi, seem to (dis)play themselves through one another, bridging spatial and temporal distances through photography—that which is, as James Corby paraphrases Philip Larkin, the faithful and disappointing art. Like antae, all three papers try to open up spaces which might seem at first glance closed, or perhaps try to close up spaces which seem to be too widely open.

The two conference reviews also published in this issue point towards the vast possibilities opened up through interdisciplinarity, that hollow valley suspended in the portico, and which can therefore make obvious the multitude of impossible openings and spectral finalities in space and time.

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