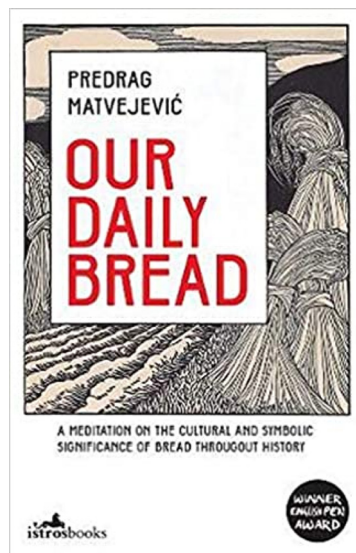


## Our Daily Bread. A Meditation on the Cultural and Symbolic Significance of Bread throughout History

Matvejević (P.). Pp. 166, ills. London: Istros Books, 2020. Paper, £10.99. ISBN: 9781912545094 <http://istrosbooks.com/products/books/our-daily-bread-110/>

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Reading this book brought me a great deal of joy, and I found much to savour both as a Classicist and as a keen home baker. Matvejević takes you on bumpy journey across the places and historical periods that are linked to the history and significance of bread, and the constant hopping through time, languages and geography makes it a real page turner.

As the book title reveals, this is a meditation, and you are invited to see the history of bread from the nuanced perspective of the author.

Readers should not expect an exhaustive and factual approach, but rather a personal picture with its roots in Europe and the Mediterranean. The life experiences of the author are the motor of the narrative, and thorough scholarship is shared in a very accessible way. Overall, the book is a treasure trove of anecdotes and scientific and literary information, as well as of a very substantial number of etymological facts and curiosities. Avid philologists may find that they are being deprived of information because quotes are often presented either directly in translation and/or transliteration without the original text, with just a few exceptions to this. The same may apply to those looking for references, as sources cannot be traced easily. However, the lack of footnotes and bibliographical information is part of the allure of a book that is best enjoyed with feet up and away from the desk – ideally with a fresh loaf of bread! And regarding bread, that is one of the highlights of the book: there is much to learn about the traditions behind modern bread-making techniques, and the encyclopaedic amount of information about seeds, cultivation, manufacture and consumption is truly enlightening. The relationship which different religions and ideologies have had with bread over time is presented beautifully intertwined with the history of agriculture and breadmaking. Matvejević finishes the book with a personal reflection on modern-day food culture and supply security, and it asks interesting questions about the future of our societies in relation to food.

The physical book itself is very pleasantly designed, and the spare but relevant illustrations are well chosen and informative. I cannot comment on the fidelity of the translation because I do not speak Croatian, but the resulting text is in itself a literary achievement and makes for very pleasant reading. Equally, I cannot possibly vouch for the exact accuracy of quotes, references and dates, but even at times when the focus is not on presenting accurate historical data, a *se non è vero è ben trovato* makes it all fall into place. This is a must-read for anyone interested in anthropology in general and the history of food in particular.

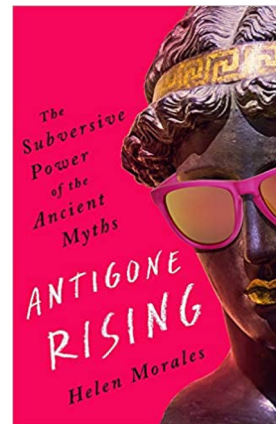
doi: 10.1017/S2058631021000167

## Antigone rising. The Subversive Power of the Ancient Myths

Morales (H.). Pp. xviii + 204. New York: Bold Type Books, 2020. Cased, US\$26, CA\$33. ISBN: 978-1-56858-935-0

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I wanted to review this book because the idea of myths being resonant in our increasingly complex modern society is a hot topic and, as a teacher, I try to encourage students who have so many choices laid before them, to study ancient literature. Myths are perhaps the answer as they express truths (unpleasant ones in many cases) and Morales' new book addresses this issue in a practical and accessible way, in a book that would grace the shelves of any school library or Classics (or English) department. Firstly, why

myth? This is a common question in papers dealing with Greek tragedy. Why did the tragedians use myths set way back in history rather than using contemporary stories to illustrate their moral point? Well, firstly, after Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus* of 492 BCE was banned for causing distress to the audience in Athens so soon after the event, tragedies retelling the story of wars tended to focus on Athenian victories; Aeschylus' *Persae* of 472 BCE fortunately fell into this category. Secondly, there is a tendency among some audience members to concentrate too closely on whether actors are portraying contemporary characters well enough or whether minor details are correct ('That type of car wasn't sold until 1993 and this scene is set in 1990'). So, myths provide a distance between our reality and the 'truth' that those myths are telling us so that the audience, listener or reader can focus on the bigger truth as told by the myth. In her preface, Morales turns to this question, asking why in 2016 *Antigone in Ferguson* was staged in response to the killing of 18 year-old Michael Brown Jr. by police there in 2014, and she