

APHRODITE-LIDIA NOUNANAKI is a Research Associate at the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre, Academy of Athens, Greece

APHRODITE-LIDIA NOUNANAKI

Artificial Intelligence as Cultural Intermediary: Vernacularizing Greek Antiquity via Algorithmic Vlog Performance

Artificial intelligence (AI)-generated short-form vlogs reanimate figures from Greek antiquity as camera-facing speakers on TikTok and Instagram. Treating AI as a cultural intermediary, this essay examines vernacularization through revoicing, visual vernacularization, and sensory mediation, and shows how vernacular authority is negotiated in comment-thread uptake under algorithmic visibility. The case demonstrates how folklore becomes scalable through platform templates and generative embodiment.

Keywords (from the AFS Ethnographic Thesaurus):

Digital media, cultural change, social networking (social media), non-textual narratives, first-person narratives, transmission, artificial intelligence, popular culture

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has become increasingly integrated into everyday digital environments, shaping how people communicate, create, and circulate cultural material. For many users, it is encountered less through laboratory demonstrations or corporate announcements than through platform feeds, where AI-generated texts, images, voices, and videos enter routine communicative exchanges and become resources for play, commentary, self-presentation, and creative experimentation (Crawford 2021:3–6; Rettberg 2023:1–4). Such practices complicate accounts that frame generative AI primarily as either technological disruption or a source of cultural anxiety. A folkloristic perspective instead should direct attention to how generative systems are incorporated into established expressive practices. Social media users have long appropriated digital affordances to perform identities, negotiate belonging, circulate beliefs, and share experiences within networked environments (Blank 2009:4–6; Peck 2020:7–10; Abidin 2021:79–81). Generative systems extend these possibilities across text, image, sound, and video.¹

These developments can be situated within a longer history of cultural forms adapting to new communicative environments. A central insight of folklore studies is that transmission proceeds through continuity, variation, and recontextualization: genres, voices, actions, and

This is an uncorrected advance copy of an essay that has been formally peer reviewed and accepted for publication in *Journal of American Folklore* 140(556) but has not received final copyediting, typesetting, pagination, or proof corrections. The final published version may differ. The definitive, citable version will be published in Spring 2027.

Terms of Use: This manuscript is protected by copyright held by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois and is shared for personal, non-commercial use only. It may not be uploaded to public repositories, commercial sharing sites, or distributed further without explicit permission from the publisher.

How to Cite: Please cite the final published Version of Record (VOR) upon its release. Alternative Provisional Citation: Nounanaki, A. (2027). Artificial Intelligence as Cultural Intermediary: Vernacularizing Greek Antiquity via Algorithmic Vlog Performance. Accepted for publication in *Journal of American Folklore* 140(556). DOI: 10.5406/15351882.140.556.04

interpretive frameworks move across settings and media, retaining recognizable elements while acquiring new meanings and social functions (Bauman 1986:2–4; Bauman and Briggs 1990:73–77; Couldry 2012:121–4; Blank 2009:5–7; Peck 2020:3–6; Pink et al. 2016:8–11; Cocq 2019:4–6). Generative AI intensifies these dynamics while introducing infrastructures of circulation shaped by platform algorithms and data-driven visibility (Seaver 2017:1–12; Couldry and Mejias 2019:338–9). In this sense, AI operates as a cultural intermediary through which culturally authoritative and vernacular materials are rendered encounterable, shareable, and socially legible within platform environments.

This interaction between continuity and transformation is particularly visible in the AI-generated short-form videos examined in this article, which reanimate figures from Greek antiquity as contemporary vloggers. In these performances, inherited narratives and figures are recast through the immediacy, direct address, synthetic embodiment, and participatory conventions of platform culture. The videos can therefore be understood as instances of vernacularization, through which canonically valued material is revoiced and recontextualized in forms suited to contemporary digital communication.² AI functions here neither as an autonomous author nor as a neutral tool, but as part of the process through which voice, face, persona, and address are produced and circulated.³

Understanding this case requires a clarification about the cultural status of Greek antiquity. It can be approached not only as “classical literature” but as a culturally active repertoire embedded in Greek vernacular life and in the cultural politics of heritage. Myths, tragic narratives, epic episodes, and historical figures often appear to belong primarily to institutional frameworks of education, archaeology, tourism, and public culture, through which antiquity has repeatedly been invested with national and symbolic value (Herzfeld 1987:17–42; Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996:117–29; Yalouri 2001:1–24). Yet these materials also circulate beyond such frameworks, through everyday speech, popular reference, national imaginaries, and shared cultural knowledge. Even when specific texts are not known in detail, many figures and plots remain broadly recognizable. Their vernacular reworking, therefore, cannot be treated as a neutral stylistic shift: it involves culturally charged material whose authority is shaped both by institutional mediation and by everyday forms of recognition.

What matters here is not whether these materials originate in canonical texts, but how they continue to live through transmission, recontextualization, and social uptake. Canonical narratives become traditional not simply by being preserved as inherited texts, but by acquiring vernacular afterlives: they are retold, condensed, reframed, and mobilized as resources in everyday expression. Greek antiquity can therefore be understood as a form of cultural memory repeatedly reactivated across contexts and genres, a shared reservoir of narrative authority rather than a closed literary domain (Assmann 2011:25–32; Bendix 2000:37–54).

The present case therefore brings together two longer trajectories: the use of successive technologies in the reworking of vernacular forms and the repeated remediation of antiquity through changing media. The AI-generated vlog performances examined here belong to this longer history of mediated antiquity, especially that of *antiquity on screen*. Greek antiquity has repeatedly been reimagined through audiovisual forms that render gods,

heroes, rulers, warriors, philosophers, and tragic figures as embodied and affectively legible characters for contemporary audiences. Film and television have made ancient figures meaningful through historically specific conventions of intimacy, spectacle, emotional identification, conflict, and serial narration, demonstrating that antiquity is not simply transmitted from the past but remade through the media forms that make it visible, desirable, and narratively compelling in the present (Cyrino 2005:3–8; 2013:2–6). AI-generated antiquity vlogs continue this history of audiovisual reception, drawing on familiar processes of characterization, embodiment, visibility, desire, and narrative adaptation (Cyrino 2005:1–12).

These performances relocate mediated antiquity into the micro-serial and camera-facing conventions of short-form social media. Ancient figures are no longer staged primarily through cinema or prestige television; they appear as direct-address speakers who narrate events as present experience within a format organized by immediacy, humor, intimacy, repetition, and response. Still, like earlier screen representations, they give ancient figures recognizable bodies, voices, emotions, and narrative presence, inviting audiences to encounter them as characters rather than distant textual, mythological, or historical subjects (Cyrino 2005:45–60). Yet the platformed form alters the conditions of reception: comments, requests, corrections, jokes, and affective responses are not external to the performance but participate in how each video is evaluated, extended, contested, and made meaningful.

This case therefore extends classical reception not only by adding generative AI to the history of screen antiquity, but by relocating reception into a platformed feedback loop. Mediation, audience response, algorithmic visibility, and synthetic embodiment become mutually constitutive: ancient figures are not only represented for viewers, but continually evaluated, corrected, requested, and reformatted through the participatory conditions of the feed. Seen in this light, the format does more than adapt antiquity to another medium. It brings an already mediated classical repertoire into the participatory logic of the social media feed, where inherited material is subjected to variation, recognition, and social uptake within environments shaped by generative AI and platform circulation.

The Case and Approach: AI-Generated Antiquity Vlogs as Platformed Vernacular Practice

AIverseGR (@aiversegr), the Greek-language account at the center of this discussion, has circulated AI-generated short-form videos on TikTok and Instagram since June 2025.⁴ In its recurring format, figures from antiquity speak as contemporary creators: Antigone recounts the events of Sophocles' tragedy as personal testimony, Odysseus explains the Trojan Horse as a DIY project, and Praxiteles demonstrates his craft in the style of a "how-to" vlogger.⁵ In one example, translated here into English, Alexander the Great announces: "Morning, legends—a little workout, a ride with Bucephalus. Tomorrow's vlog: a casual conquest at Gaugamela. It's going to be wild." On screen, he walks along a beach beside Bucephalus, with soldiers in the background, as though recording an informal update from within the campaign.⁶ Together, the script and visual staging capture the format's broader effect: ancient narrative takes on the familiar register of an everyday platform update.

The process behind AInverseGR's format is best understood as a human-led form of hybrid co-creation, in which creative tasks are distributed between human expertise and generative systems while human direction remains central (Kirkby et al. 2025:385–90; Armstrong and Shah 2026:1–2). Publicly documented elements include prompting, synthetic image and voice generation, Greek subtitles or voiceover, and platform tagging through hashtags.⁷ Beyond these technical elements, the culturally situated scripts indicate human direction in concept development and scriptwriting. Relocating figures such as Alexander the Great into vlog culture through context-sensitive Greek slang, sarcasm, and topical humor establishes the narrative perspective and verbal register. Generative tools supply the raw audiovisual material. The resulting character continuity, clip sequencing, coordination of speech, music, and sound effects, and platform-ready presentation point to human curation and post-production. AI thus supplies synthetic voice, image, movement, and embodiment, while human intent organizes the narrative, performance, and final composition, giving the account its culturally specific voice.

Across these human-led, AI-mediated productions, a platformed vernacular practice takes shape through vlog and Storytime conventions that draw on the evaluative logic of personal-experience narrative, recasting culturally authoritative narratives as lived, affectively interpreted events (Labov and Waletzky 1967:12–44; Labov 2013:14–43, 176–92; Nounanaki and Kakampoura 2026:95–113). Vocal delivery, facial animation, setting, and direct address produce a sense of immediacy and co-presence for viewers (Bauman 1977:11–16; Abidin 2021:79–81). The protagonist thereby functions not only as narrator but as an evaluative platform persona whose partial viewpoint guides the adaptation. Following publication, viewer commentary extends the adaptation into an ongoing communicative event in which its meanings remain open to negotiation (Buccitelli 2012:75–81; Burgess and Green 2018:53–60). TikTok and Instagram consequently function as field sites whose interfaces, recommendation systems, and conventions shape how the videos are encountered and responded to (Hine 2015:1–4; Pink et al. 2016:1–6; Cocq 2019:4–6).

AI-generated character videos circulate across linguistic and cultural contexts, including Greek-language accounts that use synthetic figures for topical humor and commentary on everyday life. Within this broader field, AInverseGR is distinctive not because it is technologically unique, but because it repeatedly anchors the format in Greek antiquity, contemporary Greek language, locally recognizable humor, and culturally specific registers of familiarity.⁸ The account's substantial output and sustained antiquity-vlog template make it possible to trace relations among performance, circulation, and uptake across repeated iterations. The case is therefore analytically intensive rather than representative: it examines one sustained practice rather than attempting to map the full range of AI-generated antiquity on social media.

The study draws on a corpus assembled through a retrospective review of the account and sustained observation on TikTok and Instagram from October 2025 through February 2026. It comprises all 86 videos concerning Greek antiquity published by the account up to the end of that period, including videos posted before formal observation began. Items were included when they featured an ancient figure or narrative in the account's recurring vlog-based format; posts concerning unrelated cultural repertoires were excluded. Keyword and

hashtag searches were used only to contextualize the account within wider AI-assisted character-vlogging practices, not to enlarge the primary corpus. AI-related hashtags were also treated as vernacular metadata: user-generated labels that shape discoverability and help users recognize dispersed videos as instances of a shared platform genre (Nounanaki 2025:4). Each item was logged by platform, publication and observation dates, URL, protagonist or narrative, formal features, and visible reception. This complete account-based sample supports close analysis of one sustained practice without claiming exhaustive platform capture (Nounanaki 2025:4–5).

Following a small-data qualitative logic, close reading integrated formal and reception analysis by relating each video's multimodal construction to its audience uptake. All comments publicly visible across the 86 videos during observation were read; response volume ranged from fewer than ten comments on some posts to more than 4,000 on the most widely circulated, enabling comparison across levels of visibility without sampling selected threads. Comments were analyzed as situated acts of vernacular meaning-making, not as data for measuring opinion or response frequency. The researcher's position as a Greek-speaking observer supported culturally situated interpretation while requiring reflexive attention to meanings less transparent to international readers (Hine 2015:1–4; Pink et al. 2016:1–6; Nounanaki 2025:4–7).

Ethical principles for digital ethnography guided how the corpus was assembled, documented, and presented; public accessibility alone was not treated as sufficient ethical justification. The study therefore sought a balance among the interests of the account's creators and participating viewers, the integrity of the platform context, and the analytical needs of the research (franzke et al. 2020:8–12, 20; Nounanaki 2025:5–7). Only material publicly accessible during observation was examined; users were not contacted, and private or restricted material was excluded. Usernames and identifying details are omitted, comments are paraphrased unless exact wording is analytically necessary, and screenshots or audiovisual excerpts are not reproduced when description suffices. Rather than downloading videos into a decontextualized private archive, the research log recorded their URLs and maintained the connections among audiovisual form, metadata, and changing comment threads, while recognizing that any form of web archiving selectively stabilizes mutable communication (Lomborg 2012:219–31). This kept the material tied to its platform context but made the corpus dependent on continued availability, since deleted, altered, or restricted material cannot be recovered. That dependence also defines the limits of the article's claims: the analysis cannot reconstruct the algorithmic pathways through which users encountered the videos or represent all Greek-language responses. Instead, it draws on this bounded corpus and its visible reception to examine how one sustained AI-mediated vernacular form becomes recognizable, contested, and repeatable under platform conditions.

Vernacularization as Process

With the corpus and methodological framework established, the analysis turns to the cultural transformation enacted by the videos themselves. AIverseGR does not simply use generative technology to visualize antiquity or reproduce familiar narratives in audiovisual form. It recasts inherited material within modes of expression that are familiar, participatory,

and native to platform culture. Vernacularization provides the central concept for understanding this transformation.

The AI-generated antiquity vlogs examined here bring together two meanings of vernacularization. In linguistic, philological, and historical scholarship, the term has often described the movement through which local or everyday language gains ground in domains formerly associated with higher-prestige or “classical” languages, including literature, religion, and governance (Burke 2004:1–10, 61–88; Pollock 2006:1–6, 23–30, 437–67; Tahko and Marjanen 2024:122–42). In this sense, vernacularization already points to a movement from culturally authoritative forms toward socially accessible registers. In the present case, however, this movement is not exclusively linguistic. It occurs through generative systems that produce the audiovisual conditions under which ancient figures appear to speak, react, and address platform audiences. Vernacularization therefore encompasses the reformatting of voice, image, temporality, humor, and audience relations within the communicative conventions of short-form social media.⁹

In folkloristic terms, vernacularization can therefore be understood as the process through which culturally valued narratives, figures, and genres are recontextualized into forms of performance shaped by the communicative norms of specific communities and media environments (Bauman 1986:2–4; Howard 2013:77–80; Peck 2020:3–6). Rather than remaining bound to institutional, textual, or heritage frameworks, canonical material becomes available for everyday uptake through platform-native modes of address, humor, and participation. What matters is not a simple translation of material into a more accessible idiom, but a shift in communicative footing: who speaks, to whom, in what register, and under what expectations of intimacy, stance, and response.

In AIverseGR, this process operates through a coordinated shift in language, voice, temporality, and visual form. At the level of speech, figures of antiquity are moved away from elevated, archaizing, or institutionally mediated registers and into contemporary Greek marked by colloquial expression, youth-oriented slang, humor, and the informal tone of vlog culture. This linguistic movement is not merely decorative. It changes the social footing of antiquity by making culturally authoritative material available through registers associated with everyday digital communication, familiarity, and affective proximity.

Humor is central to this vernacularizing movement. It does not function simply as comic relief added to ancient material, but as a mode of recalibrating distance from it. In these videos, humor often emerges through anachronistic incongruity: ancient protagonists speak in contemporary slang, narrate mythic or tragic situations as personal drama, and frame culturally weighty episodes through the idioms of influencer culture, complaint, gossip, self-explanation, or emotional reaction. The Alexander the Great vlog offers a particularly clear example of this incongruity. The historical figure is presented as a contemporary content creator, combining period clothing, a sword, and Bucephalus with the implied presence of the smartphone and the conversational manner of an influencer. The humor emerges not simply from historical displacement, but from the collision between heroic authority and the mundane conventions of platform self-presentation.¹⁰ This mismatch between authoritative material and informal delivery produces recognizability without requiring reverence (Oring

2003:1–22). It allows antiquity to be approached through amusement, affiliation, and shareability, while also inviting viewers to participate through jokes, corrections, requests, and playful recognition (Blank 2009:15–8; Shifman 2013:18–24; Zulli and Zulli 2022:1876–9). In this sense, humor becomes a vernacular strategy for negotiating proximity to cultural authority: it lowers the threshold of engagement without simply emptying the material of significance.

This shift in register is inseparable from a shift in speaker position. The figures are not only narrated; they are made to narrate themselves. Revoicing, understood as the reanimation of existing discourse through changes in speaker position, stance, and context, becomes the mechanism through which mythic, tragic, epic, and historical material is reorganized as first-person account (Bakhtin 1981:259–64; Tannen 2007:101–5; Bauman and Briggs 1990:74–6). Ancient protagonists appear as direct-address speakers who recount events as lived experience, mostly in the present tense and with explicit affective evaluation. The result is a form of simulated testimony: canonical material is no longer encountered primarily as reported narrative or textual inheritance, but as experiential speech.

The temporal logic of the vlog intensifies this effect. Events are framed as if they were unfolding in the moment of recording, producing a sense of immediacy and co-presence. Antiquity is reorganized into an update-like form, where the speaker appears to address the audience from within the scene rather than from a retrospective narrative distance. Extended narrative sequences are consequently compressed into short, affectively charged segments adapted to the rhythm of the feed. This compression is not only a simplification of plot; it is a reformatting of narrative for a communicative economy in which recognizability, emotional stance, and rapid uptake are central. The account's multipart sequences make this compression especially visible. The stories of Icarus, Theseus, Odysseus, and Alexander the Great are distributed across successive vlog episodes, each of which isolates a particular situation and presents it as an immediate update from within the unfolding narrative.¹¹ Serialization therefore allows extended mythic or historical trajectories to be divided into individually consumable moments while preserving anticipation and continuity across posts.

The technological dimension of this revoicing is equally important. The speaking figure emerges through synthetic voice, facial animation, aesthetic styling, human prompting and selection, and platform convention. AI does not function here as an autonomous authorial agent, but as a mediating layer through which voice, face, persona, and apparent presence are assembled as audiovisual effects. The resulting “speaker” therefore condenses functions conventionally associated with narrator, performer, and tradition bearer without fully coinciding with any of them: the narrative is inherited, the performance is synthetically generated, and its communicative form is shaped by human and platformed choices. Revoicing is thus not simply the transfer of ancient discourse into a new voice, but the production of a composite speaking position whose authority depends on the coordination of cultural repertoire, generative systems, creator intervention, and audience recognition (Hancock et al. 2020:89–94; Guzman and Lewis 2020:70–6; Munk et al. 2022:5–9). AI's intermediary role lies precisely in this redistribution of agency, through which antiquity is made to appear not merely represented, but present and capable of addressing viewers

directly. This apparent presence is produced not through voice alone, but through the coordinated visual embodiment of the speaker. Revoicing therefore also depends on how the ancient figure is given a recognizable face, body, setting, and expressive form.

Vernacularization consequently takes visual as well as linguistic and performative form. Building on the longer history of audiovisual antiquity discussed above, AInverseGR relies on recognizable visual codes that make the ancient world immediately legible under the rapid conditions of short-form media. Draped garments, stone architecture, monumental settings, landscapes, weapons, heroic bodies, and expressive faces work as condensed signs of “ancientness.” They do not aim primarily at historical specificity; rather, they function as visual shorthand. In this sense, the image operates like formulaic language: it stabilizes reference, reduces complexity into recognizable signs, and enables quick comprehension within the feed (Barthes 1977:32–51; Hall 1997:13–74; Dyer 1993:11–8).

The distinction between human visual literacy and machine vision further sharpens this process. Visual literacy is not simply the capacity to identify what an image depicts; it is a culturally acquired competence through which viewers connect pictorial conventions to social, historical, and aesthetic contexts. The immediate legibility of AInverseGR therefore depends on an asymmetrical encounter between machine-generated visual patterning and human contextual recognition. The generative system recombines learned visual regularities, while viewers supply the cultural knowledge through which draped clothing, monumental architecture, bodily posture, weaponry, and facial expression cohere as recognizable signs of “antiquity.” What appears to be direct visual access to the ancient past is thus produced through the interaction between synthetic image generation and historically situated ways of seeing (Foka and von Bonsdorff 2025:5–13).

Generative AI intensifies this already established visual logic. Film, television, illustration, and popular culture have long used embodied characters, scenic settings, and familiar iconography to make antiquity visible and emotionally accessible. AI-generated vlogs accelerate this process by making embodiment flexible and serially adjustable: age, symmetry, expression, strength, beauty, seriousness, and emotional tone can be recalibrated across repeated iterations. The result is not a departure from screen antiquity, but a platform-native condensation of its visual conventions. Ancientness is anchored through recognizable iconography, while faces and bodies are tuned to contemporary expectations of affective readability and visual appeal.

Visual vernacularization is therefore inseparable from representational bias. The synthetic bodies produced in AInverseGR do not emerge from a neutral visual field, but from an already structured field of narratives, images, aesthetic conventions, and social classifications. Inherited iconographies and popular-media representations provide established ways of imagining antiquity, while training data, generative systems, and platform aesthetics reorganize these conventions into new synthetic forms. Generative AI does not simply create images of the ancient world; it participates in a longer representational process through which existing hierarchies may be amplified, condensed, or rendered newly authoritative (Foka and Griffin 2024:6125–29; Bianchi et al. 2023:1493–504; Luccioni et al. 2023:56338–51).

Bias should not, however, be located solely in the final generated image, attributed to the model alone, or understood primarily as the outcome of an individual creative decision. It operates recursively across data creation and processing, model design, prompting, deployment, selection, interpretation, and reuse, forming a “bias loop” through which cultural assumptions move between social and technological systems (Foka et al. 2025:5838–9). In platform-based antiquity vlogs, this loop connects inherited narrative and visual repertoires, socially embedded stereotypes, generative processes, and platform aesthetics. Cultural assumptions shape what appears recognizably heroic, beautiful, masculine, feminine, divine, disabled, or authentically “ancient”; generative systems reorganize these assumptions into visually legible outputs; and their repetition in circulation can reinforce the familiarity of particular bodies, faces, moods, and versions of the past. Prompting and output selection participate in this process, but they occur within an already normatively structured field of visual possibilities rather than necessarily expressing conscious exclusion.

The corpus also demonstrates why representational narrowing cannot be explained through generative bias alone. Much of AInverseGR draws on canonical narratives centered on named and culturally prominent protagonists—gods, heroes, rulers, philosophers, and tragic figures—and the first-person vlog format carries this protagonist-centered structure into its platformed reworking. The prominence of exceptional, elite, or heroic bodies therefore reflects, in part, the nature of the inherited material being adapted. The format itself is not inherently restricted to such figures: one video applies the same vlog conventions to the everyday experience of laborers involved in the construction of monumental buildings.¹² This counterexample shows that anonymous labor and non-elite life can be accommodated within the template, even though they remain peripheral to the account’s dominant narrative repertoire.

The representation of Hephaestus, however, shows that the character of the source material cannot fully account for the visual narrowing that occurs.¹³ Bodily impairment and impaired mobility are integral to the god’s mythological identity, yet the generated representation gives no visual indication of this difference and instead presents him through a conventionally attractive, muscular, and able-bodied masculine form. The image does more than compress or simplify the inherited narrative: it subjects the figure to a process of normative idealization, in which bodily difference is displaced by contemporary standards of symmetry, physical power, attractiveness, and able-bodiedness.¹⁴ The omission of Hephaestus’s impairment is therefore better understood not as an isolated creative choice, but as the outcome of socially embedded representational conventions that shape both cultural expectations and generative outputs.

Comparable forms of normative idealization appear across the corpus. Male figures tend to be rendered through strength, martial seriousness, philosophical gravity, or heroic posture, while female figures are more often represented through beauty, vulnerability, emotional expressivity, or eroticized appeal.¹⁵ Age, class, disability, poverty, regional variation, labor, and other non-elite or non-normative forms of embodiment remain less prominent. Their relative absence cannot be attributed to a single cause: it reflects both the prominence of exceptional protagonists in the inherited narratives and the idealizing visual grammar through which those narratives are synthetically regenerated. These patterns

correspond to broader evidence that text-to-image systems reproduce and amplify gendered and demographic stereotypes embedded in their training materials and wider cultural contexts (Bianchi et al. 2023:1493–504; Luccioni et al. 2023:56338–51). AI-generated visuality does not independently determine which versions of antiquity become visible but participates in a wider process through which some bodies and experiences become more readily recognizable, desirable, repeatable, and authoritative than others.

The problem, then, is not only one of historical inaccuracy. Normative idealization can also exert a normalizing effect: through repetition, culturally privileged attributes begin to appear as the expected or self-evident visual form of antiquity. Smooth faces, idealized bodies, light-toned skin, cinematic lighting, monumental settings, and emotionally legible expressions produce a past that feels immediate and accessible, but also aesthetically homogenized. The generated image does not merely illustrate the narrative; it contributes to establishing which bodies, voices, and atmospheres can plausibly stand for the ancient Greek past. The question is therefore not only how antiquity is visualized, but which versions of antiquity and Greekness become most readily recognizable under AI-mediated and platform-oriented conditions. In *AIverseGR*, contemporary Greek speech, local humor, and culturally familiar narrative references situate antiquity within a distinctly vernacular register, while the visual field often privileges idealized, heroic, beautiful, able-bodied, and immediately legible forms of embodiment. The case thus reveals a tension at the heart of platform vernacularization: antiquity may be localized linguistically and affectively even as its visual and social imagination is narrowed through normative aesthetic conventions. What may appear as “the past speaking for itself” is better understood as the outcome of inherited iconography, socially embedded aesthetic norms, generative conventions, and platform-oriented visual compression (Foka and Griffin 2024:6127–9; Foka and von Bonsdorff 2025:41–3). The sensory immediacy of these representations is therefore not independent of their selectivity: it can intensify the persuasive force of the idealized visual grammar through which antiquity is made present (Lee 2004:27–50; Foka and Griffin 2024:6127–9).

AI-generated images should therefore be read as mediated visual arguments. They select, simplify, and stabilize particular versions of antiquity while excluding others. Their analytical value lies not in measuring them against historical accuracy alone, but in asking what they reveal about contemporary expectations of the ancient world: which bodies are made authoritative, which faces become familiar, which voices become audible, and which forms of difference remain difficult to generate, circulate, or recognize. Addressing these questions requires humanistic expertise not merely as a final corrective applied after generation, but throughout the interpretive chain through which AI-generated images of antiquity are generated, selected, evaluated, contextualized, and circulated. Bias mitigation, in this sense, cannot be reduced to a single technical intervention; it requires continuous critical interpretation and collaboration among technological, heritage, and humanistic forms of knowledge in order to make such images accountable (Foka et al. 2023:815–25; Foka and Griffin 2024:6129–32; Foka et al. 2025:5844–5; Foka and von Bonsdorff 2025:67–8).

Taken together, these processes show that vernacularization involves a shift in communicative footing rather than a change in material alone. Antiquity becomes something that can be spoken from within, visually recognized, and affectively engaged under platform

conditions. Because the videos are open to response and evaluation, this process continues in reception, where their meaning and authority are negotiated. The following section turns to these dynamics of interaction.

Vernacular Uptake and Authority

The vernacularization enacted in AI-generated antiquity vlogs does not end with the videos themselves. It becomes socially meaningful in reception, where viewers evaluate, extend, contest, and reframe the performances. In platform environments, reception is not external to the communicative event. Comments, requests, jokes, corrections, likes, shares, and other signals of engagement help determine how a post is positioned within public circulation and how its cultural meaning is stabilized or challenged (Boyd 2014:11–4; Abidin 2021:79–81; Bucher 2018:1–18). These forms of engagement do not all carry the same evidentiary weight. Written comments provide discursive evidence of interpretation, while likes, shares, and other reactions register less explicit but still socially meaningful forms of recognition, alignment, and visibility. These visible responses should not be treated as representative of the entire audience, since commenting is selective and the prominence of particular responses is itself shaped by platform ordering and moderation. Taken together, they show how vernacularized antiquity acquires resonance within what can be understood as affective publics, where engagement circulates as a collective orientation toward shared cultural material (Papacharissi 2015:1–5).

This reception requires a corresponding shift in how authority is understood. Authority in this case is not located only in institutions, textual tradition, scholarly expertise, or heritage discourse. It also emerges relationally, through the ways audiences recognize a performance as meaningful, persuasive, enjoyable, useful, or inappropriate within a given communicative context. Vernacular authority refers here to this interactional form of legitimacy: it is produced through recognition, repetition, affective alignment, correction, contestation, and participatory uptake (Bauman 1986:3–6; Howard 2013:72–80). Authority is therefore not given in advance. It becomes visible in the ways viewers orient to AI-generated antiquity as something that can be learned from, laughed with, corrected, requested, criticized, or continued.

One prominent mode of uptake is the reframing of the videos as accessible points of entry into material often perceived as distant, difficult, or institutionally bounded. The reception of the Alexander the Great vlog makes this pedagogical reorientation particularly visible: some viewers jokingly ask whether watching the video can “count” as studying, while others relate it to examinations or school knowledge and even describe the videos as possible teaching tools. Beneath the humor, these responses register a shift in the terms through which antiquity becomes cognitively and culturally usable. The videos are not simply praised for making historical material entertaining; they are evaluated for their capacity to render it memorable, intelligible, and available within the rhythms of everyday platform use. What is being negotiated, therefore, is less the authority of antiquity itself than the forms through which that authority can be accessed and retained. In this mode of reception, intelligibility acquires legitimizing force: canonical material gains practical value when it can

be translated into familiar communicative forms without losing its recognizability as culturally significant knowledge.

In reception, the comic premise becomes collaborative. Viewers do not merely recognize the incongruity established by the videos; they extend it by joking with the revoiced figure, translating ancient situations into contemporary social terms, comparing protagonists to familiar types, and proposing further characters or episodes. Humor therefore organizes a participatory relation to the material, turning the contrast between antiquity's cultural weight and the informality of its platformed revoicing into a resource for shared interpretation and elaboration (Blank 2009:15–8; Shifman 2013:18–24; Zulli and Zulli 2022:1876–9).

At the same time, uptake is not uniform. Under videos involving historically or symbolically charged figures, some viewers reject the vernacular revoicing as inappropriate, trivializing, or disrespectful. They warn that the videos may offend or anger viewers, or they respond simply with “shame” and angry emojis. These reactions reveal that vernacular authority is inherently unstable. It emerges through the negotiation of competing evaluative frameworks in which accessibility, entertainment value, cultural proximity, reverence, and symbolic integrity are differently prioritized. Vernacularization therefore does not simply democratize access to antiquity; it also exposes disagreements over how close one may come to culturally authoritative material and through which registers such proximity may be allowed.

This contestation is especially significant in the Greek context, where antiquity is not a neutral archive of stories but a culturally proximate and politically charged inheritance. It is tied to education, cultural prestige, national memory, heritage discourse, and broader claims about historical continuity and collective identity (Hamilakis 2007:57–83; Yalouri 2001:1–24; Herzfeld 1987:17–42). For this reason, the use of slang, affective exaggeration, humor, and influencer-style intimacy can be received in two opposing ways: as a successful renewal of inherited material, or as an inappropriate lowering of culturally authoritative figures into the registers of platform entertainment. The issue is not only whether the videos are accurate, funny, or educational, but who is perceived to have the right to render antiquity familiar and through which mediating forms such familiarity becomes acceptable.

This question of legitimacy cannot be located in a single source. The authority produced by AIverseGR is distributed across a platform assemblage in which inherited cultural prestige, human prompting and selection, synthetic voice, generated image, platform convention, algorithmic visibility, and audience response all participate (van Dijck 2013:12–8; van Dijck et al. 2018:9–16; Bucher 2018:1–18). Ancient figures appear to speak directly, but this apparent directness is a mediated performance of authenticity and familiarity. This does not make the performance culturally empty. Rather, it shows that authority is produced through the interaction of technological mediation and vernacular uptake. The AI-generated figure appears to speak, but its legitimacy depends on how that speech is received, repeated, challenged, and made meaningful by viewers.

This authority is negotiated not only through narrative material or institutional reference points, but also through the synthetic performance itself. Audience engagement is directed toward figures whose voices, facial expressions, gestures, and affective cues are computationally generated yet presented as coherent speaking subjects. Such forms of artificial embodiment complicate the boundaries between communicator, medium, and representation, since the apparent speaker is produced through the interaction of human creative decisions, generative systems, and platform conventions (Hancock et al. 2020:89–94; Guzman and Lewis 2020:70–6). They also introduce a perceptual dimension to vernacular authority. This sensory mediation is central to AI’s intermediary role: inherited figures are not only narratively reformatted but rendered as perceptually available presences whose credibility and affective force remain open to social evaluation. In the comments examined here, viewers repeatedly express astonishment, fascination, disbelief, or unease at the lifelikeness of the synthetic face and voice. Some humorously question whether the figure is “real,” while others express concern that AI is becoming disturbingly convincing. Such responses show that viewers engage not only with the videos as narratives or jokes, but also with the impression that the ancient figure is present, embodied, and affectively available. Synthetic faces, synchronized voices, and recognizable emotional cues can make artificial figures appear perceptually and socially immediate, thereby strengthening both their appeal and their capacity to provoke suspicion (Lee 2004:27–50; Lombard and Ditton 1997; Foka and Griffin 2024:6127–9). The vernacularization at stake is therefore not only linguistic or generic but also perceptual: antiquity is encountered through an intensified audiovisual immediacy that complicates distinctions between performance, simulation, and testimony. The past becomes persuasive not simply because it is explained, but because it appears to address the viewer through a face, a voice, and a recognizable emotional stance.

A further dimension of uptake lies in the way viewers anchor antiquity within locally meaningful frames of reference. Commenters draw on colloquial Greek expressions, school memories, popular culture, humor styles, and culturally specific associations to reinterpret ancient figures through familiar codes. This process is described here as vernacular indexing: the alignment of culturally authoritative material with locally recognizable forms of expression and reference. The Alexander video provides a particularly clear example. Alongside remarks on the protagonist’s contemporary urban manner of speaking, viewers make the synthetic ancient figures culturally intelligible through specific, locally recognizable contemporary public figures (Alexander is compared to tennis player Stefanos Tsitsipas and Roxane to singer Ria Ellinidou). Such responses do not simply modernize the ancient narrative in general terms, they locate it within specifically Greek repertoires of speech, celebrity, popular culture, humor, and visual recognition. When viewers joke about a mythological or historical figure as if they were socially familiar, compare an ancient character to a contemporary public figure, or rephrase an ancient episode in everyday terms, they relocate antiquity from a distant symbolic domain into a shared field of social experience. Authority here emerges through cultural alignment. The past becomes persuasive when it can be articulated through forms already meaningful within the community that receives it. These responses demonstrate that the legitimacy of AI-mediated antiquity is negotiated through competing criteria of accuracy, accessibility, reverence, amusement, cultural identification, sensory credibility, and heritage ownership.

The same dynamics also point toward form. A recurrent pattern in the comment threads involves genre recognition and participatory extension: viewers respond not by treating each video as a closed narrative, but by proposing further instantiations of the format. In response to the Alexander vlog, for example, viewers suggest a “what I eat in a day” episode, a “get ready with me” video before the battle of Issus, and an Instagram-style appearance by Roxane. Such suggestions operate as vernacular production briefs: they recognize the AI-generated antiquity vlog as an iterable template and informally co-direct its extension across figures, narratives, and platform genres (Shifman 2013:18–24; Zulli and Zulli 2022:1876–79). What becomes socially recognizable and authoritative also becomes available for repetition.

What is at stake here is the passage from a successful vernacular performance to a form capable of further circulation. Vernacularization describes the refooting of antiquity into the registers of contemporary platform communication, while vernacular authority emerges through the evaluative work by which viewers accept, correct, contest, or extend that refooting. The requests for new episodes and platform genres mark a different threshold, one that should not be collapsed into either familiarization or reception alone. Once viewers can imagine the same structure applied to other figures, stories, and creator formats, the performance has begun to operate as a template rather than as a single instance. This threshold is where trendification begins: not as popularity alone, but as the formatting of a vernacular form for repetition under platform conditions. Scalability names the further capacity of that template to move across narratives and genres while remaining recognizable. The following section therefore shifts from the negotiation of legitimacy in reception to the conditions under which an AI-mediated vernacular form becomes repeatable, adaptable, and scalable.

AI Trendification and the Scalability of Vernacular Forms

Trendification refers here to the organization of vernacular expression into recognizable and platform-compatible templates that can be repeated, varied, and rapidly taken up across contexts.¹⁶ In this sense, it names the process through which digital forms become recognizable not simply because they circulate widely, but because they acquire a repeatable structure that invites imitation, variation, and further circulation within platform environments (Shifman 2013:40–42; Zulli and Zulli 2022:1876–79). In AIverseGR, the antiquity vlog becomes scalable when its communicative structure can be reapplied across different figures, episodes, and narrative situations. Its circulation depends not only on cultural meaning, but also on its alignment with platform logics of recognizability, repetition, visibility, and rapid uptake.

This emphasis on reproducible templates does not replace folkloristic accounts of repetition, variation, and genre formation; rather, it specifies how platform infrastructures, including visibility metrics, recommendation systems, and expectations of participation, channel these processes into recognizable pathways of uptake and reuse. The vlog format provides the central template. Organized around first-person address, present-tense narration, and an implied relationship with an audience positioned as follower or confidant (Tolson 2010:277–89; Frobenius 2014:59–72), it offers an established platform structure that

AIverseGR adapts to canonically valued figures. Its distinctiveness lies in relocating antiquity into a form associated with ordinary and intimate self-expression.

Trendification here operates as a form of vernacular genre-making. The account shows that the transferable unit is broader than testimonial vlogging alone. Different figures and narratives are reformatted through recognizable conventions of contemporary creator culture: Odysseus presents the construction of the Trojan Horse as a DIY (“do-it-yourself”) project, Helen of Troy appears in a GRWM (“get ready with me”) format, Pandora’s opening of the jar becomes an “unboxing” video, and the Pythia’s preparation for delivering an oracle is rendered through ASMR (“autonomous sensory meridian response”) conventions. The “ancient worker” sequence shifts further from the named protagonist by adopting an immersive POV (“point of view”) format. Introduced through the premise “POV: You Are a Worker at the Ancient Monuments,” the videos position the viewer in the worker’s visual perspective, showing what an anonymous laborer might see while participating in the construction of monuments such as the Lighthouse of Alexandria, the Colossus of Rhodes, and the Egyptian pyramids. What recurs across these examples is therefore not a fixed script or even a single vlog genre, but the broader premise that antiquity can be reformatted through recognizable modes of contemporary platform culture..¹⁷

Platform mediation is consequently inseparable from this process. Short-form platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and Facebook Reels do not merely host cultural expression; they structure its production and circulation through engagement metrics, recommendation systems, modular formats, and datafied feedback (Gillespie 2014:167–71; Bucher 2018:1–6; Nieborg and Poell 2018:4275–80). Visibility is organized around forms that can be rapidly recognized, affectively processed, and reiterated. Cultural expression is therefore shaped in relation to the conditions under which it may become visible and circulate. Trendification is not only a cultural process but also an infrastructural one, emerging at the intersection of user practices, technological affordances, and platform economies.

Within this environment, generative AI facilitates trendification rather than independently producing it. By enabling the comparatively rapid production of synthetic faces, voices, and personae, it expands the range of figures and situations through which an established template can be realized. This adaptability remains dependent on prompting practices, model capabilities, proprietary infrastructures, platform conventions, human prompting and selection, and audience expectations. AI therefore contributes to scalability by extending mediation into embodiment: voice, face, and apparent presence can be generated rather than merely recorded and distributed. What becomes more readily repeatable is neither culturally nor technologically neutral.

Scalability is used here in a qualified sense. It does not imply exact replication or expansion without transformation. The format scales because its basic communicative architecture remains recognizable while its characters, narratives, language, humor, visual details, and cultural references change across individual realizations. It is therefore the relative stability of the template, rather than the invariability of its manifestations, that enables circulation across multiple instances (Tsing 2012:505–10). Variation is not an

obstacle to scalability; it is one of the conditions through which the format remains culturally productive. What scales is not an identical text but a recognizable relation among speaker, narrative world, platform form, and audience.

Trendification also unfolds through dynamic of glocalization: AIverseGR appropriates a globally recognizable short-form vlog template but reorganizes it through Greek antiquity, contemporary Greek, locally meaningful humor, and culturally specific registers of familiarity. The form's recurrence depends on such openness to localized adaptation: situated meanings, identities, and memories can be embedded within a shared communicative structure. The result is not cultural uniformity, but a platform form that is globally legible and locally differentiated (Robertson 1995:28–31).

As noted earlier, the persistence of tradition depends not on the preservation of an immutable original, but on its capacity to be repeatedly performed, varied, and recontextualized (Bauman 1986:2–4; Bauman and Briggs 1990:60–3; Howard 2013:72–80; Blank 2009:1–20). This point becomes especially consequential here. Within AI-mediated platform culture, the adaptability of antiquity is not simply evidence of its continuing relevance; it is the condition that allows culturally authoritative material to enter repeatable formats while retaining sufficient recognizability to remain meaningful. Trendification thus names the point at which continuity through transformation becomes organized through platform-compatible templates: antiquity remains recognizable precisely because it can be reformatted, repeated, and varied across figures, episodes, and narrative situations.

Under these conditions, iterability also acquires a technical dimension. Inherited material becomes available to prompting, recombination, and synthetic embodiment within the constraints of generative and platform systems. Tradition is not reduced to information or data; rather, its recognizable elements become technically reconfigurable and available for re-performance in new audiovisual forms.

This process remains fundamentally vernacular because the videos are produced, circulated, interpreted, and extended within participatory environments where culturally shared material becomes a resource for expression. Yet trendification should not be treated as an unambiguously expansive force. It may extend the circulation of tradition by embedding it within contemporary communicative forms, while simultaneously selecting, standardizing, and compressing those elements most compatible with rapid recognition and platform visibility. Features that are less visually legible, emotionally immediate, or adaptable to the template may remain peripheral or disappear from circulation.

Generative AI amplifies established dynamics of vernacular creativity by increasing their speed, flexibility, and dependence on platform infrastructures. In AI-generated antiquity vlogs, tradition persists by becoming speakable, visible, and shareable within templates aligned with algorithmic circulation and user practice. Trendification thus extends circulation while selectively formatting those elements most compatible with platform recognition, revealing how the past is mobilized to express the present within globally connected but locally grounded environments.

Conclusion

The case of AInverseGR demonstrates how generative AI can function as a cultural intermediary. It does not originate cultural meaning independently, nor does it simply transmit inherited material unchanged. Rather, it participates in reorganizing the forms, relations, and conditions through which that material becomes perceptible, performable, circulatable, and interpretable. Its cultural significance therefore lies not only in its capacity to generate images, voices, or moving figures, but in the way these capacities enter into relations with cultural memory, human creative practice, platform infrastructures, and audience response.

AInverseGR is particularly revealing because Greek antiquity is already a densely mediated and culturally authoritative repertoire. The account extends this history of mediation by reworking familiar figures and narratives within short-form social media. The case therefore shows that AI-mediated production proceeds through continuity and transformation rather than through a complete break with earlier representational forms.

Vernacularization names one of the principal processes through which this mediation occurs. In AInverseGR, authoritative cultural material is rendered socially proximate through contemporary language, humor, experiential narration, and familiar platform genres. Antiquity becomes available not only for observation or instruction, but also for recognition, amusement, commentary, disagreement, and further creative use. This movement does not simply diminish its symbolic authority. It relocates that authority within a communicative register where familiarity and participation become conditions of engagement. Cultural significance is consequently neither preserved intact nor dissolved; it is renegotiated as inherited material enters new relations with everyday expression.

This mediation is also selective and non-neutral. Generative systems operate within representational fields already structured by inherited iconographies, social stereotypes, training data, aesthetic conventions, prompting practices, and expectations of rapid visual legibility. They can expand the means through which cultural material is embodied and circulated while simultaneously narrowing the range of bodies, experiences, and social worlds that become readily visible. The normative idealization found across the corpus illustrates this dual operation: synthetic visualization makes antiquity immediately recognizable and affectively accessible, yet often does so through contemporary standards of beauty, gender, strength, emotional expressivity, and able-bodiedness. To describe AI as a cultural intermediary is therefore not to imagine it as a passive bridge. Mediation involves selection, reorganization, amplification, and omission as much as connection.

Meaning, however, is not determined by the generated form alone. Audience uptake is integral to the cultural force of AI-mediated material. Responses to synthetic lifelikeness show that this mediation is sensory as well as linguistic and narrative: AI gives inherited figures an apparent voice, face, and affective presence that viewers assess as convincing, uncanny, playful, or inappropriate. Through corrections, comparisons, objections, jokes, and requests for new episodes or formats, viewers also help establish what the videos can mean and how the template may develop. Vernacular authority consequently emerges relationally:

it is produced through the interaction of inherited cultural status, technological form, human creative practice, platform circulation, and social evaluation rather than residing exclusively in any one of them.

Trendification and scalability extend this process beyond the individual video. Once the AI antiquity vlog becomes recognizable as a platform-compatible form, it can be repeated across protagonists, narratives, episodes, and creator genres while remaining open to variation. Generative AI facilitates this adaptability by making audiovisual embodiment more readily reproducible, but technological capacity alone does not explain the form's circulation. Scalability also depends on the recognizability of the underlying repertoire, the stability of the platform template, and the participation of audiences who identify, evaluate, and encourage its continuation. What becomes scalable is therefore not merely a technical output, but a culturally intelligible arrangement among inherited narrative, generated embodiment, platform convention, and audience expectation.

Although a single Greek-language account cannot represent the full diversity of AI-mediated vernacular production, AIverseGR makes visible a broader mechanism through which generative systems become culturally consequential: they enter established processes of transmission, variation, performance, circulation, and evaluation, altering the speed, scale, and audiovisual immediacy with which these processes unfold. The case of AIverseGR's short form videos expands the analysis of contemporary vernacular production without abandoning the central concerns of folklore studies. Variation, adaptation, performance, and uptake remain fundamental, but they now unfold through assemblages that include human prompting and selection, machine generation, inherited cultural materials, platform infrastructures, and participatory interpretation. AI should consequently be approached neither as an autonomous cultural agent nor as a neutral instrument, but as a cultural intermediary whose effects emerge from these entanglements. AIverseGR shows that the meaning of AI-generated cultural expression resides not simply in the generated output, but in how generated forms are situated, circulated, recognized, contested, and made socially meaningful.

References Cited

- Abidin, Crystal. 2021. Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours. *Cultural Science Journal* 12(1):77–103.
- Armstrong, Ben, and Julie Shah. 2026. Humans in the Loop: The Evolution of Work in Early Experiments with Generative AI. MIT Industrial Performance Center.
- Assmann, Jan. 2011. *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press.

How to Cite: Please cite the final published Version of Record (VOR) upon its release. Alternative Provisional Citation: Nounanaki, A. (2027). Artificial Intelligence as Cultural Intermediary: Vernacularizing Greek Antiquity via Algorithmic Vlog Performance. Accepted for publication in *Journal of American Folklore* 140(556). DOI: 10.5406/15351882.140.556.04

- Barthes, Roland. 1977. Rhetoric of the Image. In *Image–Music–Text*, selected and translated by Stephen Heath. Fontana Press.
- Bauman, Richard. 1977. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Newbury House.
- Bauman, Richard. 1986. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bauman, Richard, and Charles L. Briggs. 1990. Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19:59–88.
- Baumgartner, Wendel Heinrich. 2025. Green Gentrification in Lisbon (Portugal): A Study About Marvila’s Riverfront. *European Journal of Geography* 16(2):108–21.
- Bendix, Regina. 2000. Heredity, Hybridity, and Heritage from One Fin de Siècle to the Next. In *Folklore, Heritage Politics and Ethnic Diversity: A Festschrift for Barbro Klein*, edited by Pertti J. Anttonen, Anna-Leena Siikala, Stein R. Mathisen, and Leif Magnusson. Multicultural Centre.
- Bianchi, Federico, Pratyusha Kalluri, Esin Durmus, et al. 2023. Easily Accessible Text-to-Image Generation Amplifies Demographic Stereotypes at Large Scale. In *Proceedings of the 2023 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*, 1493–504. Association for Computing Machinery.
- Blank, Trevor J. 2009. Toward a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Folklore and the Internet. In *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*, edited by Trevor J. Blank. Utah State University Press.
- Boyd, Danah. 2014. *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press.
- Buccitelli, Anthony Bak. 2012. Performance 2.0: Observations Toward a Theory of the Digital Performance of Folklore. In *Folk Culture in the Digital Age: The Emergent Dynamics of Human Interaction*, edited by Trevor J. Blank. Utah State University Press.
- Bucher, Taina. 2018. *If...Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Burgess, Jean, and Joshua Green. 2018. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (2nd edition). Polity.
- Burke, Peter. 2004. *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, Joseph. 1949. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Pantheon Books.

- Cocq, Copp  lie. 2019. The Where, How and Who of Digital Ethnography. *Folklore Fellows Network* 53:3–6.
- Cocq, Copp  lie, and Evelina Liliequist. 2024. Digital Ethnography: A Qualitative Approach to Digital Cultures, Spaces, and Socialites. *First Monday* 29(5).
- Couldry, Nick. 2012. *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Polity.
- Couldry, Nick, and Ulises A. Mejias. 2019. Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data’s Relation to the Contemporary Subject. *Television & New Media* 20(4):336–49.
- Crawford, Kate. 2021. *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. Yale University Press.
- Cyrino, Monica S. 2005. *Big Screen Rome*. Blackwell.
- Cyrino, Monica S., ed. 2013. *Screening Love and Sex in the Ancient World*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Davis, Lennard J. 1995. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. Verso.
- Dyer, Richard. 1993. *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations*. Routledge.
- Foka, Anna, Lina Eklund, Anders Sundnes L  vlie, and Gabriele Griffin. 2023. Critically Assessing AI/ML for Cultural Heritage: Potentials and Challenges. In *Handbook of Critical Studies of Artificial Intelligence*, edited by Simon Lindgren. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Foka, Anna, and Gabriele Griffin. 2024. AI, Cultural Heritage, and Bias: Some Key Queries That Arise from the Use of GenAI. *Heritage* 7(11):6125–36.
- Foka, Anna, Gabriele Griffin, Dalia Ortiz Pablo, Paulina Rajkowska, and Sushruth Badri. 2025. Tracing the Bias Loop: AI, Cultural Heritage and Bias-Mitigating in Practice. *AI & Society* 40:5835–47.
- Foka, Anna, and Jan von Bonsdorff. 2025. *AI and Image: Critical Perspectives on the Application of Technology on Art and Cultural Heritage*. Cambridge University Press.
- franzke, aline shakti, Anja Bechmann, Michael Zimmer, Charles M. Ess, eds. 2020. *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*. Association of Internet Researchers. <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>.
- Frobenius, Maximiliane. 2014. Audience Design in Monologues: How Vloggers Involve Their Viewers. *Journal of Pragmatics* 72:59–72.

- Gillespie, Tarleton. 2014. The Relevance of Algorithms. In *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, edited by Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot. MIT Press.
- Guzman, Andrea L., and Seth C. Lewis. 2020. Artificial Intelligence and Communication: A Human–Machine Communication Research Agenda. *New Media & Society* 22(1):70–86.
- Hall, Stuart. 1997. The Work of Representation. In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall. Sage.
- Hamilakis, Yannis. 2007. *The Nation and Its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece*. Oxford University Press.
- Hamilakis, Yannis, and Eleana Yalouri. 1996. Antiquities as Symbolic Capital in Modern Greek Society. *Antiquity* 70(267):117–29.
- Hancock, Jeffrey T., Mor Naaman, and Karen Levy. 2020. AI-Mediated Communication: Definition, Research Agenda, and Ethical Considerations. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 25(1):89–100.
- Harris, Deborah A., and Rachel Phillips. 2021. What’s Better than a Biscuit?: Gourmetization and the Transformation of a Southern Food Staple. *Food and Foodways* 29(3):243–263.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1987. *Anthropology Through the Looking-Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hine, Christine. 2015. *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. Routledge.
- Howard, Robert Glenn. 2013. Vernacular Authority: Critically Engaging “Tradition.” In *Tradition in the Twenty-First Century: Locating the Role of the Past in the Present*, edited by Trevor J. Blank and Robert Glenn Howard. Utah State University Press.
- Jung, C. G. 1959. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Kirkby, Alexandra, Carsten Baumgarth, and Jörg Henseler. 2025. Welcome, New Brand Colleague! A Conceptual Framework for Efficient and Effective Human–AI Co-Creation for Creative Brand Voice. *Journal of Brand Management* 32:385–99.
- Labov, William. 2013. *The Language of Life and Death: The Transformation of Experience in Oral Narrative*. Cambridge University Press.

- Labov, William, and Joshua Waletzky. 1967. Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience. In *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, edited by June Helm. University of Washington Press.
- Lee, Kwan Min. 2004. Presence, Explicated. *Communication Theory* 14(1):27–50.
- Levitt, Peggy, and Sally Merry. 2009. Vernacularization on the Ground: Local Uses of Global Women's Rights in Peru, China, India, and the United States. *Global Networks* 9(4):441–61.
- Lombard, Matthew, and Theresa Ditton. 1997. At the Heart of It All: The Concept of Presence. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 3(2).
- Lomborg, Stine. 2012. Researching Communicative Practice: Web Archiving in Qualitative Social Media Research. *Journal of Technology in Human Services* 30(3–4):219–31.
- Luccioni, Alexandra Sasha, Christopher Akiki, Margaret Mitchell, and Yacine Jernite. 2023. Stable Bias: Evaluating Societal Representations in Diffusion Models. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems* 36:56338–51.
- Merry, Sally Engle. 2006. *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*. University of Chicago Press.
- Munk, Anders Kristian, Asger G. Olesen, and Mathieu Jacomy. 2022. The Thick Machine: Anthropological AI Between Explanation and Explication. *Big Data & Society* 9(1):1–14.
- Nieborg, David B., and Thomas Poell. 2018. The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity. *New Media & Society* 20(11):4275–92.
- Nounanaki, Aphrodite-Lidia. 2025. Between Trend and Testimony: Methodological Challenges and Ethical Imperatives in TikTok Digital Ethnographic Research. *Journal of Engineering, Technology and Applied Sciences* 3(2):1–8.
- Nounanaki, Aphrodite-Lidia, and Rea Kakampoura. 2026. Storytime: When Personal Experience Narratives Become a TikTok Trend. *Estudis de Literatura Oral Popular* 15:95–113.
- Oring, Elliott. 2003. *Engaging Humor*. University of Illinois Press.
- Papacharissi, Zizi. 2015. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Peck, Andrew. 2020. Introduction: Old Practices, New Media. In *Folklore and Social Media*, edited by Andrew Peck and Trevor J. Blank. Utah State University Press.

How to Cite: Please cite the final published Version of Record (VOR) upon its release. Alternative Provisional Citation: Nounanaki, A. (2027). Artificial Intelligence as Cultural Intermediary: Vernacularizing Greek Antiquity via Algorithmic Vlog Performance. Accepted for publication in *Journal of American Folklore* 140(556). DOI: 10.5406/15351882.140.556.04

- Pink, Sarah, Heather A. Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, and Jo Tacchi. 2016. *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice*. Sage.
- Pollock, Sheldon. 2006. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. University of California Press.
- Rettberg, Jill Walker. 2023. *Machine Vision: How Algorithms Are Changing the Way We See the World*. Polity.
- Robertson, Roland. 1995. Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity. In *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson. Sage.
- Seaver, Nick. 2017. Algorithms as Culture: Some Tactics for the Ethnography of Algorithmic Systems. *Big Data & Society* 4(2):1–12.
- Shifman, Limor. 2013. *Memes in Digital Culture*. MIT Press.
- Tahko, Tuuli, and Jani Marjanen. 2024. Vernacularization: A Cross-Disciplinary Review. *Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory* 27(2):122–42.
- Tannen, Deborah. 2007. *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse* (2nd edition). Cambridge University Press.
- Tolson, Andrew. 2010. A New Authenticity? Communicative Practices on YouTube. *Critical Discourse Studies* 7(4):277–89.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2012. On Nonscalability: The Living World Is Not Amenable to Precision-Nested Scales. *Common Knowledge* 18(3):505–24.
- van Dijck, José. 2013. *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford University Press.
- van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal. 2018. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford University Press.
- Yalouri, Eleana. 2001. *The Acropolis: Global Fame, Local Claim*. Berg.
- Zulli, Diana, and David James Zulli. 2022. Extending the Internet Meme: Conceptualizing Technological Mimesis and Imitation Publics on the TikTok Platform. *New Media & Society* 24(8):1872–90.

¹ In this article, generative artificial intelligence refers to computational systems, widely accessible through online platforms, that produce synthesized text, images, voices, and audiovisual material in response to user prompts and examples. Unlike earlier search interfaces that primarily returned lists of links, generative systems can produce direct, contextually structured outputs—such as summaries, explanations, narratives, images, and videos—thereby extending information retrieval into on-demand content production. In AI-generated vlog-style videos, this logic combines synthetic speech, facial animation, and visual rendering to create camera-facing personas. These systems do not operate independently, however, but through human prompting, selection, and iteration, as well as through model capabilities and platform-specific affordances that shape how generated material is produced and circulated. Generative AI is therefore approached here not as an autonomous authorial force, but as a mediating infrastructure embedded in everyday practices of digital expression and vernacular cultural production.

² Here the term canonical refers to cultural material that has acquired institutional recognition, prestige, and relative stability through processes of selection, preservation, and repeated circulation. Canonical narratives, figures, or texts are culturally authoritative because they have been reinforced through frameworks such as education, literary tradition, heritage discourse, and national historiography. In this sense, the canon may be understood as a form of cultural memory sustained through institutions that preserve and authorize particular traditions over others (Assmann 2011:97–103). From a folkloristic perspective, however, canonical material does not stand outside vernacular culture. It remains open to reinterpretation, reperformance, and vernacular recontextualization.

³ A vlog, short for “video blog,” is an online video format in which individuals record and publish personal reflections, opinions, activities, or experiences, usually for a regular audience (see Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “vlog,” accessed June 26, 2026, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vlog>). Unlike text-based blogs, vlogs rely on audiovisual self-presentation, including voice, facial expression, setting, gesture, and direct address. A vlogger is the creator or presenter of such videos, typically appearing as the recognizable speaking presence through which the video is organized (see Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “vlogger,” accessed June 26, 2026, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vlogger>). All URLs cited in this article were last accessed in September 2026.

⁴ See AIverseGR on Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/aiversegr/>, and TikTok, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr>. All social-media links cited in the notes were publicly accessible during the observation period and were checked again in June 2026.

⁵ See the videos at the following TikTok links: Antigone and Electra, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7524276306016505110> and <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7525078527952194818>; Diogenes, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7522392671663475990>; Heracles, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7522019891411537174>; Hephaestus, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7520610353558899990>; Odysseus,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DLUdQXjoG2f/>; Leonidas, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7512804566249786646>; Praxiteles, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7520989875869420822>; and Alexander the Great, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKjaYbgInNh/>.

⁶ See the Alexander the Great video at <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKjaYbgInNh/?igsh=NzJ3dmNoMDM1djVI>

⁷ See PTTL Team, “AIverseGr: Ο λογαριασμός που φέρνει την τεχνητή νοημοσύνη στην ελληνική μυθολογία μέσω TikTok και Instagram” [AIverseGr: The Account Bringing Artificial Intelligence to Greek Mythology through TikTok and Instagram], June 19, 2025. Access the full Greek text at <https://www.pttl.gr/aiversegr-ai-tiktok-mythologia/>.

⁸ For further examples of this broader platform trend, see @christian.keller71, which applies the vlog-template logic to Disney characters by recasting them through familiar TikTok genres and affective scenarios. Representative videos include “If Disney Princesses Had TikTok and Gave Dating Advice” (watch the video at <https://www.tiktok.com/@christian.keller71/video/7512747843539504406>) and “Disney Princesses Having Emotional Breakdown” (watch the video at <https://www.tiktok.com/@christian.keller71/video/7528402733926190358>). Adjacent but formally distinct uses of generative AI within the Greek-language TikTok environment can be found also in @theowlgreece (watch at <https://www.tiktok.com/@theowlgreece>), which offers further experiments with AI-generated narration and characterization. These accounts clarify AIverseGR’s specificity: its production is organized around a comparatively stable, antiquity-centered, first-person vlog template rather than the more varied forms of fictional dialogue, topical humor, and everyday social commentary found in adjacent examples.

⁹ Vernacularization is used across disciplines with different analytical meanings. In legal anthropology, for example, it describes how globally circulating frameworks such as human-rights discourse are translated and reframed by local actors in culturally resonant ways (Merry 2006; Levitt and Merry 2009:441–61).

¹⁰ See the Alexander the Great vlog at <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKjaYbgInNh/>.

¹¹ For examples of serialized mythological narration, see the videos at the following Instagram links: Icarus, Part 4: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLerad_I3D7/; Theseus, Part 2: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMXdVgBoyAc/>; Theseus, Part 3: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DOn9mYcCJj0/>; Odysseus, Part 1: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKovSvDI3ex/>; and Odysseus on Ogygia, Part 5: <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7566629475941698819>.

¹² See the ancient-workers video at <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7512122458519129366>.

¹³ See the Hephaestus video at <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7520610353558899990>.

How to Cite: Please cite the final published Version of Record (VOR) upon its release. Alternative Provisional Citation: Nounanaki, A. (2027). Artificial Intelligence as Cultural Intermediary: Vernacularizing Greek Antiquity via Algorithmic Vlog Performance. Accepted for publication in *Journal of American Folklore* 140(556). DOI: 10.5406/15351882.140.556.04

¹⁴ The term “normative idealization” is used here to distinguish the representational operation from its broader cultural effect. Idealization refers to the reshaping of bodies toward socially valued attributes such as youth, symmetry, muscularity, beauty, able-bodiedness, and emotional legibility. The qualifier “normative” emphasizes that these attributes are not neutral aesthetic improvements, but culturally organized standards that influence which bodies appear plausible, desirable, or representative. Through repetition, such idealization can acquire a normalizing effect, making privileged bodily forms appear unmarked or self-evident while rendering difference exceptional, undesirable, or invisible. The formulation draws on analyses of stereotypes as socially structured representational conventions and of bodily normalcy as a historically produced cultural category (Dyer 1993:11–8; Davis 1995:23–49).

¹⁵ See, for example, King Midas represented as a young, vigorous man (watch the video at <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7548748321507020054>) and Iphigenia represented as youthful, attractive, and naive while vlogging Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* (watch the video at <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7530936900811492630>).

¹⁶ The term “trendification” is not coined in this article. It already exists in English usage and has appeared in different cultural and academic contexts, usually to describe the process by which places, foods, practices, or social issues are reframed as trends. For example, it has been used in relation to the transformation of regional food cultures and in discussions of urban redevelopment, hipsterization, and social-media visibility (see Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “trendification, n.,” accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/trendification_n; Harris and Phillips 2021:243–63; Baumgartner 2025:114). The present article uses the term in a more specific folkloristic and platform-oriented sense: not simply as the making of something fashionable, trendy, or viral, but as the formatting of vernacular expression into recognizable, repeatable, and platform-compatible templates.

¹⁷ See the following AIverseGR videos: “POV: You Are a Worker at the Ancient Monuments,” <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7512122458519129366?lang=el-GR>; Helen of Troy in a GRWM at, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7515435506763697430?lang=el-GR>; Praxiteles “how to” video at <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/752098987586942082>, Pandora in the “unboxing” video at, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7516568670982786326?lang=el-GR>; the Pythia in an ASMR format, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7516872157608103190?lang=el-GR>; and Odysseus in the DIY project at, <https://www.tiktok.com/@aiversegr/video/7519824511672306966?lang=el-GR>. In this video Odysseus introduces himself informally as “Oddy,” further aligning the ancient protagonist with contemporary modes of platform self-presentation. The Pandora example makes especially effective use of the “unboxing” format, since the myth itself turns on the opening of the container and its consequences.