

The Colossus of Rhodes: A Powerful Enigma

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The Colossus of Rhodes, the icon of the island, occupies a unique position from Antiquity to present times. No one can claim to have found or excavated the Colossus, let alone describe with certainty what it looked like, how it was constructed or where it was erected. Over the years it has nonetheless been the subject of many studies based on archaeological and textual data, and it still attracts scholarly interest – and, indeed, other kinds of interest.¹ The biography of the statue as a concept is remarkable. Part of the reason for this may simply be that very soon after it was erected it became a myth: it was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World, and its fame meant it came to be employed as an illustration in a variety of different discourses. What follows cannot aim to cover all possible references to the Colossus, but rather highlights some of the key moments in the statue's approximately two thousand years of history.

Before doing so it may be useful to briefly outline the textual sources. We learn from Polybius, Strabo and Plinius that the Colossus was made by Chares from Lindos, a pupil of Lysippos, that it stood 60, 70 or even 80 cubits high,² took 12 years to complete and cost 300 talents, money realised from selling the war machines left by Demetrius Poliorchetes after his unsuccessful siege of Rhodes in 305 BC.³ We are furthermore informed that it was toppled by an earthquake half a century after it was erected, and that when it lay broken at the knees on the inside could be seen large masses of rock. Plinius elaborates on its size, writing that few people could make their arms meet around the thumb of the figure, and that its fingers were larger than most whole statues. Polybios stresses how clever the Rhodians were after the earthquake in obtaining economic support, in particular from kings like King Ptolemy of Egypt, who among other contributions offered three thousand talents (of bronze?) for the restoration of the Colossus.⁴ Strabo, on the other hand, states that an oracle prohibited it from being re-erected. Philo of Byzantium provides the most detailed account, whether false or true,

of the technical details concerning the construction of the Colossus. According to him the feet of the statue, which were filled in rocks, were fixed upon a base of white marble.⁵ Furthermore, Johannes Malalas, a historian from Antiochia at Odessa (AD 490-575), reports in his book (ch. 11.18) that 312 years after its fall, during which time none of it went missing, Hadrian re-erected it on the same spot at a cost of three Centenaria of gold, the fact of which was inscribed on its base.

The size of the statue and the fact that it was made of bronze have particularly intrigued those who have commented on it. Using Philo's account in *De Septem Orbis Spectaculis*, the sculptor Herbert Maryon proposed that for the amount of 500 talents the statue mentioned by Philo must have been constructed on the site from thin, beaten-out sheets, while Haynes with reference to the same text claimed that it was cast in sections, also on the site.⁶ It is described as a 'colossus', but what exactly made a statue a colossus has been debated. Wilamowitz-Möllendorf proposed that it was not until the first century BC that the term came to designate a colossal statue, probably in connection with the erection of the Helios statue on Rhodes.⁷ Roux wrote that the Helios statue on Rhodes was called a 'colossus' because "it looked like primitive statues with un-separated legs that men called colossoi; the Colossos of Rhodes was not much more than a great pillar with a head on it".⁸ However, having examined the use of the term 'colossus' in Archaic to Hellenistic written sources, Dickie concluded that the suggestions of Wilamowitz-Möllendorf and Roux are not sustainable and that the term was used earlier to designate very large statues of gods as well as humans.⁹ The flexibility of the term is furthermore indicated by Plinius, who informs us that the Colossus of Helios was taller than another hundred colossoi erected in the same city. The location of the statue has also been, and still is, a much-debated topic. While some argue for its erection at the harbour of the city of Rhodes, bestriding the harbour entrance or not,¹⁰ others point to a place in the sanctuary of Apollo Pytheos, who perhaps merged with Helios on the Acropolis of Rhodes.¹¹

The erection of a statue to the Sun God Helios in a Rhodian context is not surprising, as he was the divine ancestor of Kamiros, Ialysos and Lindos, founders of the old island centres. Together they founded the city of Rhodes in 408 BC. The statue was an appropriate gesture from the grateful Rhodians. Helios was not one of the Olympian

gods, but belonged to the earlier race of Titans, and as a cosmological god he was useful to a number of regents. Alexander the Great assimilated himself with Helios, and as pointed out by Fulinska, Alexander's features are seen on Rhodian coins from the fourth century BC onwards showing the crowned head of Helios.¹² Alexander's successors likewise used the imagery of Helios and Apollo, with whom he amalgamated; significantly for the Seleucid regents, both gods could be identified with ancient Near Eastern gods and kings. In particular Antiochus IV (187-175 BC) used this constellation "to convey the king's divinity to his Babylonian and Iranian subjects, as well as to those in the western Seleucid kingdom".¹³ In a similar way the Ptolemies associated the old Egyptian sun god with Helios in order to ascertain their divine ancestry, suggesting the contribution to the re-erection of the Colossus of Rhodes offered by Ptolemy was probably more than an act of piety. Roman emperors likewise likened themselves with the sun god, alias Sol Invictus, the most illustrious being Nero, who erected a colossus of the god in his Golden House in Rome. It was probably scaled to match the Rhodian colossus, and given a portrait of Nero.¹⁴ Later moved to a location next to the Colosseum by Hadrian, this particular statue was given a new head of Sol/Helios, but ancient writers also describe other alterations made by various Roman emperors up to Constantine.¹⁵ Malalas' account is believed by some scholars, like Hoepfner, who consider the Hadrianic re-erection of the Rhodian Colossus trustworthy because Malalas' information concerning the building and restoration activities of Hadrian is otherwise reliable.¹⁶ Others, including Boatwright, believe that Malalas confused the Colossus on Rhodes with Hadrian's relocation of Nero's colossus in Rome.¹⁷ Although we shall probably never know the true story, we may conclude that several powerful potentates were brought into relation with the Colossus during Antiquity.

The statue has also been drawn into a somewhat different discourse. It has been suggested that the apostle John, who composed the *Book of Revelation* or the *Apocalypse* on the Greek island of Patmos, was at least partly inspired by the Colossus on Rhodes and the Sun God Helios. In some respects his Angel of Revelation builds on figures described in older scriptures, but certain details like the iris (interpreted as a halo), the cloud, the face compared with the sun, the feet compared with columns of fire, as well as the posture of the angel with one foot on the sea

and one on land and the right hand raised towards heaven, have been interpreted as elements created by John, who based them on the Colossus of Rhodes.¹⁸ Witulsky builds his account of this influence on Hoepfner's arguments for a Hadrianic re-erection of the Colossus at the harbour of Rhodes, although not bestriding the harbour mouth, and dates the *Revelation* to the reign of Hadrian. However, the date of the *Revelation* has also been a matter of debate, and while it is mostly placed during the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96), a Flavian (AD 68-69), a Trajanic (AD 98-117) and a Hadrianic (AD 117-138) date have all been proposed. The Roman emperors are relevant because the Nero Redivivus myth is considered the basis for John's *Revelation*; using gematria in the form of the number of 666 in *Revelation* 13.18, an identification of the Beast with Nero Redivivus has been suggested.¹⁹ In *Revelation* 17.10, in which five kings are described as already fallen, one presently ruling, a seventh yet to reign and then an eighth who is also one of the previous seven, the last mentioned has been identified with Nero Redivivus.²⁰ However, it has also been suggested that direct and indirect references in the *Sibylline Oracles* 5 and 8 point to Hadrian as the Nero Redivivus.²¹ The ongoing discussions and confusions concerning the Rhodian Colossus and the colossus in Rome are underlined in a study by Van Kooten, who dates the *Revelation* to

1 Higgins 1988; Hoepfner 2003; Brodersen 2007; Badoud 2012; Vedder 2015; Lund 2017.

2 Dickie, 1996, 252, n. 42.

3 Ph. IV; Str. XIV.2.5; Plin. HN XXXIV.41-42.

4 Polyb. V.89.3.

5 Maryon 1956, 69.

6 Maryon 1956, 68; Haynes 1957, 312.

7 Von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf 1927, 169.

8 Roux 1960, 32.

9 Dickie 1996, 248; Badoud 2012, 8.

10 Hoepfner 2003, 53.

11 Vedder 2015, 29, 65; Lund 2017, 141.

12 Fulinska 2012, 392, n. 5.

13 Panagiotis & Lorber 2009, 28.

14 Albertson 2001, 103.

15 Marlow 2006, 225.

16 Hoepfner 2003, 101.

17 Boatwright 2000, 24.

18 Witulsky 2011, 567.

19 Van Kooten 2007, 207.

20 Kreitzer 1988, 93.

21 Kreitzer 1988, 114.

AD 68-69, the year of the four emperors, specifically the early part of Vitellius' reign, and considers the colossus in Rome as the source of John's description of the angel in the *Apocalypse*.²² He dates the change of Nero's colossus into Helios to Vespasian times, and concludes that John's description refers to this statue.²³

The association of both colossoi with Roman emperors draws them into discussions about imperial cults. According to Friesen, an important issue in the *Book of Revelation* is John's opposition to imperial cults,²⁴ and Strait, discussing Paul's polemic against idols in the *Areopagus Speech*, likewise emphasises the Jewish and early Christian concern with statues and the Roman imperial cult.²⁵ Botha, on the other hand, argues against scholars of the *New Testament*, who according to him have tended to view imperial cults as politics during the early Christian period, rather than interconnected cosmologies with no rational separation between nature and the divine.²⁶ For him these scholars have overlooked the fact that most Mediterranean people worshipped the emperor, and that even in Rome the emperor was considered a god while still alive.²⁷ Botha writes "The Roman world (and obviously that of early Christians) is an interconnected cosmology... These statues were not just representing or depicting someone, but were possible sources of power, sometimes revelation".²⁸ This is connected to another contentious issue: the relationships between gods and idolatry and animated statues. While some argue animated statues existed in Greek Antiquity and led to Plato's critique,²⁹ others object that we have no evidence for animation rituals prior to late Antiquity.³⁰ However, in his studies of pagan writers Deligiannakis has pointed out that the distinction between pagan, Christian and empirical beliefs were not clear cut, because theurgy is "a specific feature of late Neoplatonism combining Platonic theology and the esoteric interpretation of myths with practices of traditional worship and various ancient mystery traditions".³¹

Various objects including coins, reliefs, amphora stamps and figurines have been instrumental in the efforts to reconstruct the Colossus on Rhodes,³² but few depictions of the statue, even imaginary ones, are known from the Roman to Medieval period. There is a floor mosaic from Kyrenaika (Ghasr Libia) dated to AD 539, which shows a conflation of two of the Wonders of the World, the Pharos of Alexandria and the Colossus of Rhodes,³³ and an eleventh-century print in which the statue stands erect on a column, holding a spear and a sword in its hands.³⁴ The

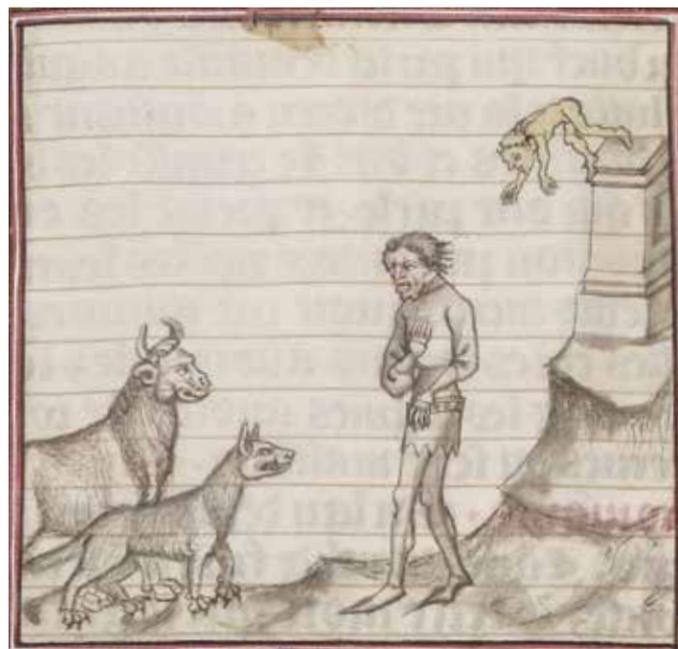


Fig. 1. Perrin Remiet, illustration in a manuscript of Jean de Vignay, *Miroir Historial*, from 1396, 204r. Source: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

earliest representation in the West is more entertaining. In a book manuscript an illustration by Perrin Remit from 1396 depicts the Colossus falling from its base (Fig. 1).³⁵ There is a comical element to it – the figure stretches its arms forwards like a human trying to protect himself from impact with the ground – and it certainly deserves to be described as animated.

The western interest in Greek manuscripts was promoted by Juan Fernández de Heredia, who was master of the Knights of St. John of Rhodes from 1377 to 1396,³⁶ but what was to become the standard image of the statue, standing with legs astride and feet resting on the piers of the harbour entrance to the city of Rhodes, only appeared after Rhodes surrendered to Suleiman the Magnificent in 1522. Maerten van Heemskerck's painting from 1535 shows a statue of the Capitoline Hercules type holding a lantern and a club, and is perhaps inspired by Brittanico and oral tradition as suggested by Badoud,³⁷ and in Heemskerck's later illustration from 1570 the statue is equipped with a bow and quiver, and carries a torch and a whip. A halo is seen around its head. According to Badoud, this is a mixture of Apollo Belvedere and an unknown Late Roman

Fig. 2. Antoine Caron's drawing of Artemisia's conquest of Rhodes for Nicolas Houel's manuscript *L'Histoire de la Royne Arthemise*, in honour of Catherine Medici. Source: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



work of Sol Invictus that was reproduced in small bronzes.³⁸ A similar and contemporary version holding a spear and a bow was produced by Antoine Caron for Nicolas Houel's book *L'Histoire de la Royne Arthemise*, in glorification of Catherine Medici (Fig. 2).³⁹ Unlike previous images, then, this one is more than an illustration of a text on World History, or the Wonders of the World. Cosimo de Medici, the father of Catherine de Medici, was inspired by Gemistus Pletho, who believed in a new universalising religion based on theurgy and inspired Cosimo to found a new Platonic Academy in Florence. With Marsilium Ficino as the head of the academy, ancient theurgic texts were translated, among others the so-called *On Sacrifice of Magic*, which was important for understanding theurgic statue animation.⁴⁰ Caron's illustrations were meant as designs for tapestries, but the project was not realised until Henri IV had them made for Marie Medici by Francois de Comans and Marc de la Planche around 1607.⁴¹ Catherine was widowed in 1559 she built the so-called Valois Mausoleum in her dead husband's honour. Houel's book was composed to glorify Catherine and her son, the future Charles IX, by making references to Artemisia, who erected the Mausoleum at

22 Van Kooten 2007, 221.

23 Van Kooten 2007, 222, 224.

24 Friesen 2005, 372.

25 Strait 2017, 614.

26 Botha 2004, 23.

27 Botha 2004, 14, 30.

28 Botha 2004, 32.

29 E.g. Elsner 2012, 385 with further references.

30 Johnston 2008, 448.

31 Deligiannakis 2015, 181.

32 Hoepfner 2003, 65.

33 Hoepfner 2003, fig. 104.

34 Badoud 2012, fig. 1.

35 Badoud 2012, fig. 2.

36 Luttrell 1960.

37 Badoud 2012, 10, fig. 5.

38 Badoud 2012, 2, fig. 13.

39 Badoud 2012, 16, figs. 10-11.

40 Johnston 2008, 452.

41 Bertrand 2006, 43, n. 36; Badoud 2012, 16, figs. 10-11.

Halicarnassos upon the death of her husband Mausolos in 353 BC. However, according to Ffolliott, Badoud and others, the Artemisia of Houel and Caron is actually a fusion of two separate queens of Halicarnassos, both widowed with single sons and both named Artemisia: Artemisia I, ruler of Halicarnassos and protagonist in the Persian king Xerxes' naval attack on Greece in 480 BC described by Herodotus, and Artemisia II, the wife of Mausolos.⁴² According to Vitruvius, the latter Artemisia's cunning maneuvering of the Rhodian fleet led to her subsequent conquest of Rhodes.⁴³ And according to Herodotus, Xerxes held Artemisia I in high esteem for her naval skills, her good advice and her success as a female ruler; these aspects were all relevant for Catherine Medici. Like her grandmother Alfonsina Medici, Catherine was a powerful woman at a time when this was not an accepted female virtue. Along with other powerful royal women of the 15th to 16th centuries, she was praised for her manly qualities by her supporters, which highlighted her exceptional status from women as such.⁴⁴ Together, the two queens by the name of Artemisia merge female virtues such as the mourning widow and considerate mother with the manly qualities of the naval commander, orator and clever advisor. Artemisia II's conquest of Rhodes was probably also associated at the time with contemporary European political and religious challenges, including Rhodes' capture by Suleiman the Magnificent.⁴⁵ The insertion of Catherine into ancient narratives is not a unique phenomenon of her time but concords with other examples conflating mythological topics with contemporary history.⁴⁶ In this context, the Rhodian colossus is perhaps just as much a signifier of Antiquity as a reference to a particular statue.

Apart from serving as a source of inspiration to Renaissance artists, the Colossus of Rhodes is also considered a stimulus for statues in Antiquity like Nero's colossus in Rome, mentioned above. Much later, it was used by the creators of the 20m-tall statue of the so-called Hermannsdenkmal, erected in 1875 in commemoration of the Germanic victory over the Roman legions in the Teutoburgerwald in 9 BC, an instance that draws on the war memorial aspect of the Colossus of Rhodes.⁴⁷ The Statue of Liberty in New York is another oft-quoted example. However, its sculptor, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, originally intended the statue to be erected at the entrance to the newly opened Suez Channel, repeating the combination of the Rhodian Colossus and the Pharos

of Alexandria. Unable to achieve the necessary funding for his project, the statue was eventually erected in 1876 in New York harbour in memory of the American War of Independence and liberation from Great Britain.⁴⁸ It was engineered by Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel, and sponsored by France (specifically the American-French Union).

To take a few steps back in time again, during the 18th century the Medieval version of the Rhodian Colossus took on a new role in the satirical print business. These prints have been a neglected field in historical studies for a long time, but they have now been accepted as an important source for cultural history investigations.⁴⁹ In the present case examples are almost exclusively taken from the British and American traditions, though a transnational or global approach has been advocated.⁵⁰ The development and significance of political caricatures, including technical factors, certainly warrant further study.⁵¹ Satirical prints grew out of English map-making. The maps were sold both in England and abroad, in particular in France where, ironically, they proved useful to the French in supporting the American colonies' fight against England.⁵² Satirical prints with political content flourished in England during the second part of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, also called the Golden Age of Caricature, and graphic comments, in particular those made by the leading caricaturists of the time, James Gillray (1756-1815), Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), Isaac Cruikshank (1756-1811) and his son George Cruikshank (1792-1878), were popular. It has been argued that public awareness of such satirical prints and their messages was rather limited, and that they only reached those who could afford them. However, in the 1790s bound volumes were rented for half a crown for a night, and print exhibitions were arranged that charged one shilling for admission. This was still expensive, and window shopping must have been another way people became acquainted with the prints. This is documented by prints showing colourful, mixed crowds of the well-dressed and the poor gathering in front of the shops of P. Roberts and Hanna Humphrey, where satirical prints were exhibited in the windows (Fig. 3).⁵³ Later on, in 1819, a crowd outside William Hope's shop had to be cleared when George Cruikshank's "Bank Restriction Note" was put on display (see below). Satirical prints actually had a wide range of distribution, reproduced as they were on, for instance, postcards and playing cards, as well as appearing on penny ballads and the walls of pubs.⁵⁴



Fig. 3. James Gillray, "Very Slippy-Weather". Print made by Hannah Humphrey. Published by Rev John Sneyd 1808. *British Museum Satires* 11100. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

From early on the Colossus was an important source of inspiration for mostly negative cartoons, whether standing with legs astride, taking a large stride from one orbit to another, or seated astride a globe, many of them often inscribed with the word "colossus". It is quite clear that the cartoonists influenced one another, and although many different politicians were depicted, Napoleon in particular was targeted in this manner. However, British cartoonists did not spare their own politicians, and the well-known political cartoon of Robert Walpole (1676-1745) appeared in 1740.⁵⁵ It shows him striding across a harbour mouth with his feet on wool packs; the image is a comment on his reluctance to enter into the French-Spanish War. The accompanying text reads: "The Statue of a great man or the English colossus, published by George Bickham the



Fig. 4. Isaac Cruikshank, Thomas Paine "Wha wants me". Published by S.W. Fores 1792. *British Museum Satires* 8146. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

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- 42 Hdt. 7.99; 8.68-69; 87-88, 93; 107; Ffolliot 2015, 87.
 - 43 Vitr. 2. 8. 13-15.
 - 44 Thomas 2000, 72.
 - 45 Odde 2008, 186.
 - 46 Assimakopoulou 2014, 42.
 - 47 Hoepfner 2003, 87, fig. 118.
 - 48 Hoepfner 2003, 87.
 - 49 Baker 2017, 4.
 - 50 Scully 2014a, 30.
 - 51 Scully 2014b, 333.
 - 52 Baker 2017, 2.
 - 53 Clayton & O'Connell 2015, 18, fig. 4.
 - 54 Clayton & O'Connell 2015, 24.
 - 55 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 2458.



Fig. 5. Unknown artist. "Common Wealth. Colossus". A song of six verses. Published by Thomas Ewart c. 1766. British Museum Satires 4162. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

Younger". An engraving from 1774 showing "The Colossus of the North or the striding Boreas" is a critique against the North administration (1770-1782), accusing it of tyranny and venality. Lord North, who stepped down in 1783, is shown astride the parliamentary sewage of bribery and corruption.⁵⁶ Thomas Paine presents a somewhat different character. Paine moved to America in 1774. He stood for radicalism and sympathised with the French Revolution; writing in the pamphlet "Common Sense" in 1776, he encouraged American colonists to break away from England. Back in England he published "Rights of Man" in 1791, appealing to the English to introduce a republic. He had to flee from England to France, and was convicted in absentia of seditious libel by the British court. A colour engraving by Isaac Cruikshank dated 26 December 1792 shows Thomas Paine for sale, with the title "WHAT WANTS ME". The text beneath the title says: "I am ready & willing to offer my services to any Nation or People under heaven who are Desirous of Liberty & Equality" (Fig. 4).⁵⁷ Paine is rendered in a striding position, tramping upon discarded British traditions and holding up a scroll inscribed "Rights

of Man" in his right hand while his left hand clutches a dagger. He carries a bundle of weapons on his back and his head is surrounded by rays and the words "anarchy", "cruelty", "equality", "madness" and "misery", indicating the consequences for nations of following Paine's doctrine.⁵⁸ As a warning against Paine and in order to instil anti-Paine fear, the conservatives constructed stories about people going mad after reading his pamphlets; he was accused of conspiracy and even depicted in the company of a demon or the devil.⁵⁹

William Pitt the Younger (1708-1778) was another popular target for political satires. He was a British Whig statesman, and in 1756 the leader of the British Ministry. He built up the British Navy and adopted British strategy at the American frontier. In 1767 a cartoon inscribed "The Colossus" shows Pitt, like Walpole before him, with his feet planted on bases, one with a goat and inscribed "Lust", the other with a snake and the word "Fraud".⁶⁰ The year before an unknown English artist produced another caricature of Pitt entitled "the Colossus".⁶¹ Here Pitt is taking a large stride from New York to London with both feet supported



Fig. 6. James Gillray, "MIDAS, Transmuting all into [GOLD] Paper". Published by Hannah Humphrey, 9 March 1797. British Museum Satires 8995. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

by stilts. His right arm is furthermore supported by a crutch shaped like a mallet; in his left hand he holds another mallet with caduceus-like winged serpents pointing to St. Stephen's chapel (Fig. 5). This cartoon is about the repeal of the Stamp Act, and criticizes Pitt for accepting a peerage. Pitt also features in a highly praised print produced by Gillray during the period of credit and forgery crises brought on by the so-called Bank Restriction Act, which was issued in 1797 in fear of a French invasion. To avoid a run on the Bank of England a mass of new one- and two-pound bank notes was issued to replace coins, and these notes were easy to counterfeit.⁶² As a comment on this, Gillray produced a hand-coloured etching presenting Pitt



Fig. 7. "An Imperial Stride". Published by William Holland. British Museum Satires 7843. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

as a colossus astride the Bank of England, actually seated on its dome. The text reads: "MIDAS, Transmuting all into GOLD PAPER" (Fig. 6). His body is formed like a sack of gold coins, and he is spewing pound notes from both ends. The print is doubly interesting from a Classical point of view: Pitt's crown has a pair of ass's ears on it in a visual reference to King Midas of Lydia, who apart from turning everything he touched into gold was punished by Apollo for preferring Marsyas' music to Apollo's.⁶³

Among the British caricatures targeting foreign leaders Thomas Rowlandson's depiction of Catherine the Great of Russia from 1791 is noteworthy because of its female subject (Fig. 7).⁶⁴ It carries the title "AN IMPERIAL STRIDE", and comments on the British anxieties concerning the ambitious Catherine the Great, who was known for her

56 *The London Magazine*, 1774, vol. 43, 529.

57 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 8146. Cf. also Haywood 2012, pkt. 18.

58 Davis 2016, 182.

59 Davis 2016, 177, 183, fig. 12.3.

60 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 4178.

61 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 4162.

62 Haywood 2012, para. 5-6, 10, 13.

63 Clayton & O'Connell 2015, 64, no. 11.

64 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 7843.



Fig. 8. James Gillray, "Destruction of the French Colossus". Published by Hannah Humphrey, 1 Nov 1798. British Museum Satires 9260. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

sexual appetite; it shows her striding from Russia to Constantinople. Seven miniature European rulers are peering up her skirt. George III exclaims: "What! What! What! A prodigious expansion!"; Pope Pius VI adds "I shall never forget it"; and the sultan, "The whole Turkish army wouldn't satisfy her". According to McLean, although a caricature it shows some respect to Catherine and simultaneously mocks her royal peers.⁶⁵

As mentioned, Napoleon Bonaparte was a popular target in English political satirical prints during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. England was worried about the developments in France: the French revolution in 1789, the French declaration of war on England in 1793, and in particular Napoleon Bonaparte, who became First Consul



Fig. 9. William Elmes, "General Frost Shaving Little Boney". Published by Thomas Tegg, 1812. British Museum Satires 11917. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

in 1799, First Consul for life in 1802 and emperor in 1804 – before his abdication and exile to Elba, his return to France and defeat at Waterloo in 1815 and his final exile to St. Helena. The colossus aspect mostly figures during Napoleon's detour, but in 1798 James Gillray produced a hand-coloured etching entitled "Destruction of the French Colossus" (Fig. 8),⁶⁶ which, rather than addressing Napoleon, may be targeting the religious differences between France and England or the threat to Christianity as such imposed by the French revolution.⁶⁷ Here the colossus, with broken legs and arms, is also decapitated; snakes are coiling from its ears and eyes and the head wears a red beret, the feet and hands bloodied. He strides from Egypt to France. One foot rests on the pyramids, the other on the Bible, a cross and

Fig. 10. George Cruikshank, "The Corsican's last Trip, under the Guidance of his good Angel". Published by Hannah Humphrey, 1815. British Museum Satires 12530. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.



the broken scales of justice. A Tricolora is thrown around his lower body, and the head of Louis XVI is shown like a pendant hanging from his neck. He is struck from above by the arm of Britannia holding thunderbolts and a shield. Whether or not this figure stands for France, Napoleon or both, Isaac Cruikshank certainly depicted Napoleon in July 1803 striding from Europe towards the coast of England, where his foot rests among the ships of the British navy.⁶⁵ The arc of the globe forms the background. The title is "A MONSTROUS STRIDE", with the subtext "He will put his foot in it". The design seems to draw on caricatures of Catherine the Great, while another caricature has connotations of Pitt bestriding the Bank of England. Here Napoleon bestrides the globe, sitting on the pole, and below his left foot a small figure of John Bull with his hand on Old England raises his sabre towards Napoleon. The title reads "A STOPPAGE to a STRIDE over the GLOBE".⁶⁹

The colossus stance re-appears on a hand-coloured etching by William Elmes from 1812 commenting on Napoleon's retreat from Russia and emphasising that he

was not invincible (Fig. 9).⁷⁰ However, here the colossus stance is associated not with the figure of Napoleon himself but with General Frost, depicted as the Russian bear with striding legs and feet crushing Napoleon's defeated troops. Napoleon, shivering with cold and being shaved by Frost, is shown standing in between his legs, and in the background Moscow is burning. The text reads "GENERAL FROST Shaving Little BONEY", a nickname invented by Gillray, and the inscription on the razor says "Russian steel". Two more caricatures from 1815 display a harsher attitude to Napoleon. George Cruikshank's etching on paper entitled "The CORSICAN'S last Trip under the

⁶⁵ McLean 2012, 20.

⁶⁶ Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 9260.

⁶⁷ Moores 2018, 112.

⁶⁸ Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 10061.

⁶⁹ Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 9981.

⁷⁰ Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 11917; Clayton & O'Connell 2015, 172, no. 108.

Guidance of his good Angel” reuses the empirical stride motif (Fig. 10).⁷¹ It depicts Napoleon striding over the sea from Elba to the throne of France, guided by the devil on his back. The other print is even more critical. It was published after Waterloo and carries two lines of text, “The Devil addressing the SUN” and “BONEY’S meditations on the island of St Helene” (Fig. 11).⁷² Now Napoleon himself is depicted as the devil, with black wings. He is standing spread-legged with cloven feet across the island of St. Helene. His hat carries inverted horns and he turns his head upwards to the sun, which is embellished with a portrait of the Prince Regent alias George, its rays inscribed with Napoleon’s enemies. On the flames being emitted from Napoleon’s mouth is written how he hates them for reminding him of his downfall. As pointed out by Moores, this presentation of the enemy as the beast was probably reinforced by the turn of the millennium, which inspired interest in eschatology and in associating Napoleon with John’s description of the Apocalypse. 666 – the number of the Beast in the Revelation – was calculated to fit Napoleon just as it was calculated to fit Nero, and the British fear of the return of Napoleon to the throne of France likewise parallels the fear of Nero’s return, as outlined above.⁷³ An earlier print by Rowlandson published in 1808 also refers to the millennium anxieties.⁷⁴ Here Napoleon is depicted as the seven-headed beast with the other heads representing his allies, and his name is misspelled to fit the number 666. The print carries the title “THE BEAST AS DESCRIBED IN THE REVELATIONS”.⁷⁵

Similar concerns are expressed by the British artist William Blake (1757-1827), who like Thomas Paine was part of the circle of poets and authors around the bookseller Joseph Johnson in the early 1790s.⁷⁶ A trained engraver who refused to paint in oils, Blake produced a series of biblical watercolours or tinted drawings for his patron Thomas Butt.⁷⁷ He was partly inspired by Classical sculpture, and he too used the image of the Colossus of Rhodes as rendered by Medieval and Renaissance artists for his “Angel of Revelation” (1803-1805) from *The Book of Revelation* chapter 10:1-7 (Fig. 12).⁷⁸ Like the angel of the Apocalypse, Blake’s angel’s legs are surrounded by fire, with one foot placed on the sea and the other on land, and light radiates from behind the statue. Blake added horsemen for the seven thunders, and the seated figure of John writing below the angel.

A school of American political caricature did not appear until the middle of the 19th century, but from the 1870s

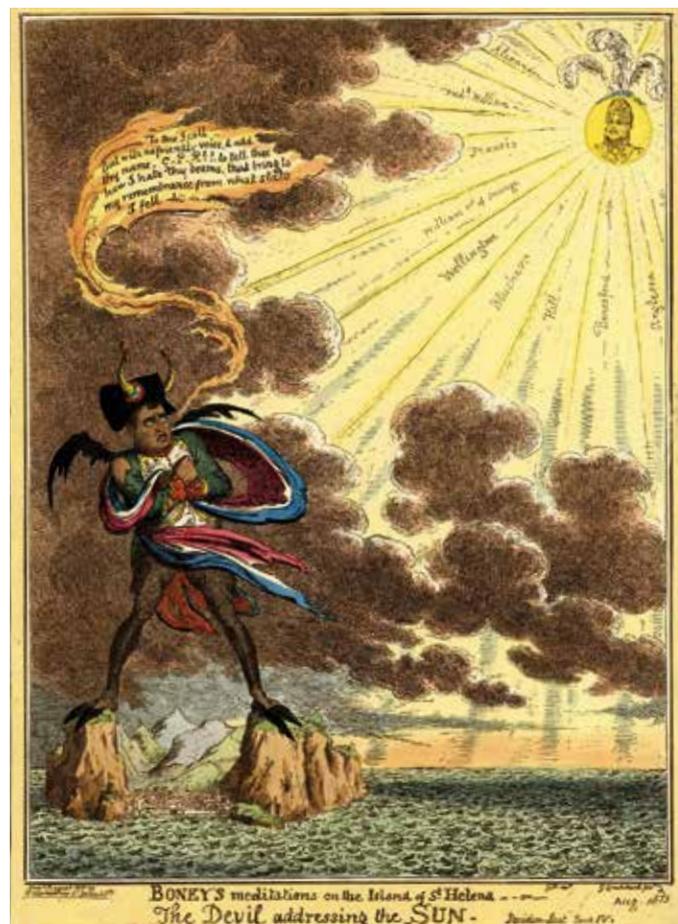


Fig. 11. George Cruikshank, after George Humphrey, “Boney’s meditations on the island of St Helene – or – The Devil Addressing the Sun”. *Paradise Lost Book IV*. British Museum Satires 12593. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

Thomas Nast, Joseph Keppler and Frederick Opper were all actively producing cartoons about ongoing political issues. The sensitive situation around Cuba and the Mexican Gulf was a particular preoccupation; Americans were intrigued by the resumed Cuban fight against Spain in 1895, and the violent Spanish response prompting the Republican president McKinley to send the USS Maine to the Bay of Havana in 1898, where it exploded, resulting in many casualties.⁷⁹ Although the figure of the spread-legged colossus became popular in connection with Cuba and the Mexican Gulf, it figures earlier in a cartoon by Joseph Harper in 1890 portraying McKinley, by then governor of Ohio, dressed like Napoleon with legs spread wide



Fig. 12. "Angel of Revelation" by William Blake, c. 1903-05. Photo courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund 1914.

and feet resting on unstable piles of gold and silver (Fig. 13). The context was McKinley's support of bi-metallism depending on an international agreement, and the cartoon was used by William Allen Rogers for *Harper's Weekly*. The construction of the Panama Canal also generated a series of critical cartoons. In 1899 *Judge Magazine* published a cartoon by Victor Gillam showing McKinley striding over the Gulf of Mexico (Fig. 14). The caption is "A THING WELL BEGUN IS HALF DONE": a comment on America's imperial ambitions following victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898, which led to American control of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rica and Guam.⁸⁰ McKinley is rolling up his sleeves, ready to get to work. American flags

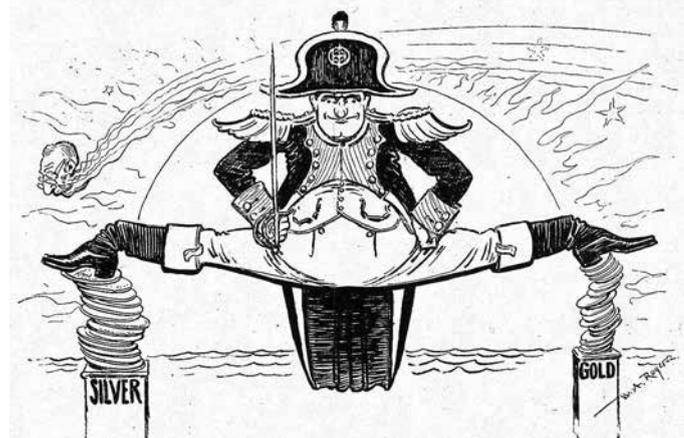


Fig. 13. "A Giant Straddle. Suggestion for a McKinley Poster". Drawing by William Allen Rogers. Source: *Harpers Weekly*, 28 March 1896, 312.



Fig. 14. President McKinley "A THING WELL BEGUN IS HALF DONE". Drawing by Victor Gillam. Source: *Judge Magazine*, 7 October, 1899.

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- 71 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 12530.
 - 72 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 12593.
 - 73 Moores 2018, 76, 116.
 - 74 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 11004.
 - 75 Clayton & O'Connell 2015, no. 107.
 - 76 Essick 1991, 190.
 - 77 Bindman 2003, 87.
 - 78 Badoud 2012, fig. 25.
 - 79 Miller, 2011, 54.
 - 80 Schumacher 2016, 202.



Fig. 15. "Uncle Sam – Did anyone say he wished to tread on the tails of my coat". Drawing by Charles L. Bartholomew. Source: Minneapolis Journal, 3 December 1898.

fly from the ships and in the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico, and Uncle Sam strides along in the background to give McKinley a helping hand, carrying a load of shovels.

Another cartoon shows T.D. Roosevelt in much the same situation: bestriding the Panama Canal, shoveling away opponents of the project (the Columbian Senate opposed it in 1903).⁸¹ In *Puck Magazine* in 1901 he was also depicted as the world's constable, swinging a stick inscribed with "The New Diplomacy" and trying to ward off European countries from interfering with Latin America.⁸² The most popular striding colossus of the period, though, was Uncle Sam, the icon of America, used to mock American imperialistic aspirations in connection with the Spanish–American War and the Monroe Doctrine. These cartoons were published in the leading American comic weeklies *Puck* and *Judge*, among others, and show in a somewhat repetitious way Uncle Sam bestriding American possessions, digging the Panama Canal and swinging Roosevelt's stick that is inscribed with the words "MONROE DOCTRINE". The intention of the Monroe Doctrine of 1923 was to prevent further European interference in the area, and although the situation was complex it is interpreted by some as a combination of



Fig. 16. Bernard Partridge Cartoons, "The Broken Colossus". Drawing by Bernard Partridge. Source: Punch Magazine, 12 February 1939.

American racial ideologies and imperial processes with ties to the British Empire.⁸³ At the opening of the Arlington Cemetery in 1902 Theodore Roosevelt justified it as a war for civilisation.⁸⁴ Charles L. Bartholomew's rendering of Uncle Sam from 1898 stands apart from the mainstream depictions. It shows Uncle Sam from behind, standing spread-legged on a map of the U.S., his coat-tails covering the Philippines, Hawaii, Cuba and Puerto Rico (Fig. 15). The text reads "UNCLE SAM – DID ANYONE SAY HE WISHED TO TREAD ON THE TAILS OF MY COAT?".⁸⁵ The irony is that not many years after the erection of the New Colossus, alias the Statue of Liberty in New York, in celebration of the liberation from the British, the striding colossus image is used to mock the imperial acts of liberated America. Through the 20th century and up to present times, the figure of the striding colossus continued to be used by cartoonists commenting on politicians. In 1940 Winston Churchill as Prime Minister bestrides the Houses of



Fig. 17. Nato and Vladimir Putin. Baglet Cartoon.

Parliament in a cartoon by Victor Weiz (Vicky).⁸⁶ Churchill is dressed as a gentleman, while satirical prints of Mussolini in the same vein are more uncompromising, as is to be expected. In 1923 *Punch Magazine* published a cartoon entitled “THE LATEST CAESAR” with the subtext “Sig. Mussolini (A bit above himself) I DO BESTRIDE THE NARROW WORLD LIKE A COLOSSUS”. Mussolini wears a Roman toga and stands with one foot on Corfu and the other on Italy, with reference to the Italian bombardment and occupation of Corfu the same year. Border issues between Albania and Greece ended with Greece paying a sum of 50,000,000 lira to Italy.⁸⁷ “The Colossus of Oaths” from *Punch Magazine* in 1939 depicts Mussolini after his invasion of Albania, dressed in an Italian uniform and striding from Italy to Albania. The subtitle says “I shan’t go any further – I was only stretching my legs”.⁸⁸ But in *Punch Magazine* in 1942 he is depicted in an even more pompous attitude, lifting his right hand, which holds a scabbard, and placing his left hand on his chest. He is dressed like a Roman soldier and carries a wreath around his head, but he is ridiculed by the broken left leg hovering over Africa where only half of his foot remains to be seen (Fig. 16).⁸⁹

My final two examples of politicians posing like the Rhodian Colossus illustrate the longevity of the figure in political satire. In the *Denver Post* in 2014 editorial cartoonist Pat Bagley commented upon the Ukrainian situation by depicting Putin spread-legged with his feet planted in Ukraine and Russia (Fig. 17).⁹⁰ He is dressed in



Fig. 18. President Donald Trump, “The Colossus of Rogues”. Drawing by Joshua Brown. Source: <http://www.theragblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Colossus-of-Rogues-Brown> (accessed 10 December, 2018).

short army shorts and high-heeled boots, and he holds a whip and what looks like a golf tee, while a group of unprepared NATO members looks on. His outfit probably refers both to Putin’s tendency to pose as a He-man and to the homophobic attitudes prevalent in Russia. A less humorous cartoon of Donald Trump was produced by Joshua Brown, entitled “The Colossus of Rogues”, published on The Rag Blog on Sunday 6 November, 2016 (Fig. 18). Trump is in his underpants, and his body is covered with words and slogans such as “misogyny”, “racism” and “narcissist”.⁹¹

81 “The man who can make the dirt fly”, drawing by Dalrymple, 1905.

82 “Speak softly and carry a big stick”, *Puck Political Cartoon*, 1901.

83 Kramer 2006, 185; Sanders 2014, 2, 26.

84 Kramer 2006, 169.

85 “Uncle Sam - Did anyone say he wished to tread on the tails of my coat?”, *Minneapolis Journal*, 3 December, 1898.

86 THE RT. HON. WINSTON CHURCHILL PRIME MINISTER, drawing by Vicky, 1940.

87 “The latest Caesar”, drawing by Leonard Raven Hill, *Punch Magazine*, 1923.

88 “The Colossus of Oaths”, drawing by Bernard Partridge, *Punch Magazine*, 1939.

89 “The Broken Colossus”, drawing by Bernard Partridge, *Punch Magazine*, 2 December 1942.

90 *The Denver Post*, 8 September 2014.

91 Link: <http://www.theragblog.com/joshua-brown-political-cartoon-the-colossus-of-rogues/> (accessed 17 December 2018).



Fig. 19. "Mock-Adam-izing: The Colossus of Roads". Published by S. W. Fores, March 1827, Piccadilly London. Photo courtesy: Trustees of the British Museum.

The colossus figure is not reserved for politicians, however; it has also been used to mock other people for their economic power and greed. According to Smylitopoulos, the colossus was one of the icons used to ridicule the upstarts or so-called Nabobs who returned to England having prospered from their services in the East India Company in India, and intending to climb the social ladder. This is illustrated by a print by Gillray from 1788 in which viscount Henry Dundas, a member of the India Board of Control, is shown striding from the company's headquarters in London to the Province of Bengal, and reaching for the sun and the moon. Dundas opposed a bill proposed by Charles Fox to transfer power over the company in India to a board of directors appointed by parliament.⁹²

A cartoon from 1827 mocks the Scot John MacAdam, the dominant road engineer of his time, who was appointed General Surveyor of Roads and received a sum of 10,000 pounds from the government (Fig. 19). He is shown spread-legged with feet resting on poles, carrying two large bags of money. The Breakstone Mill in the background threatens to lift his kilt, and the small stones being broken by the two labourers beneath him are in contrast to the large money bags, indicating that his claimed expenses were exaggerated. The caption is "MOCK-ADAM-IZING the Colossus of Roads".⁹³ Another example is the well-

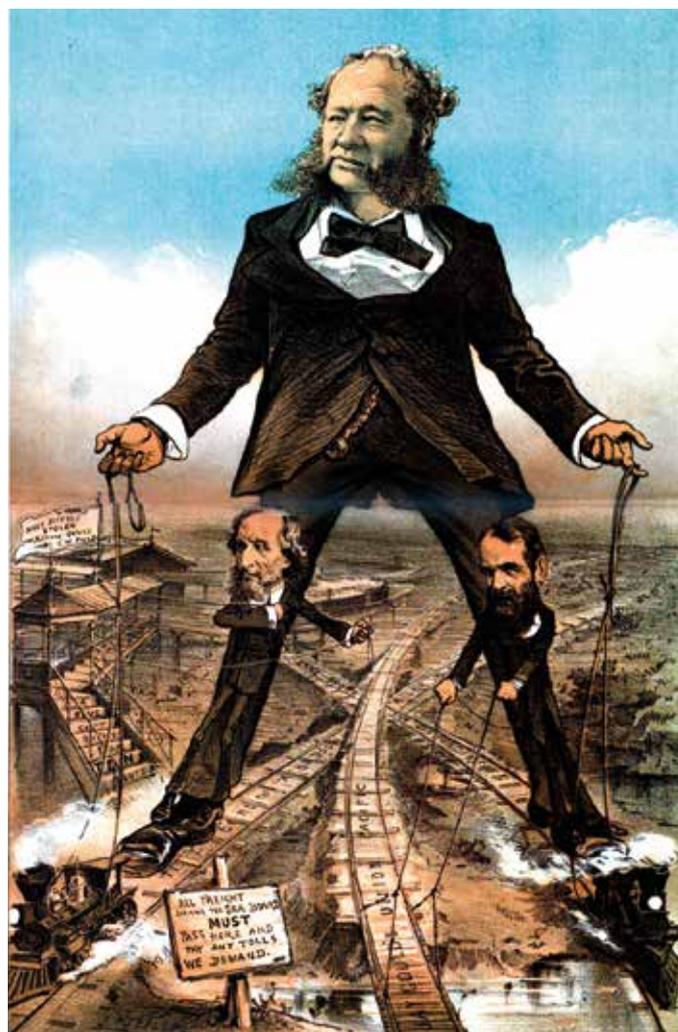


Fig. 20. "The Modern Colossus of (Rail) Roads". Drawing by Joseph Keppler, Puck Magazine VI, no. 44, December 1879.

known *Punch* cartoon from 1892 showing the millionaire and imperialist Cecil John Rhodes as the so-called Rhodes Colossus striding across the African continent from Cairo to Cape Town, holding up his proposed telegraph line in his extended hands. This cartoon was drawn by Edward Linley Sambourne (1844-1910) and published in *Punch* on 10 December 1892, perhaps inspired by Keppler's cartoon of the American railroad tycoon William Vanderbilt.⁹⁴ A Royal Charter from the British Government allowed Cecil Rhodes to control the diamond mines of modern Zimbabwe and Zambia, former Rhodesia, and he thus became an

Fig. 21. "The Colossus of Sarvos".
Photo courtesy: Melissa Trender.



archetypal image of British imperial power in Africa and the British colonialists of the late Victorian age.⁹⁵ Even after his death he remains a controversial figure. As stipulated in his will, Cecil Rhodes was buried on the mountain he called the World's View, known as the Matopos Hills area or Matojena prior to his interference. The mountain was sacred to the locals, who considered it the home of their spirits, and some groups in Zimbabwe are now requesting that his grave be removed, as it desecrates the area.⁹⁶ Others, however, object to the removal of the grave as it has become a tourist attraction and they depend on selling souvenirs for their living.⁹⁷ A similar example from America is a composite cartoon by Joseph Keppler published in *Puck* in December 1879 that carries the title "THE MODERN COLOSSUS OF (RAIL) ROADS". It shows railroad tycoon William Henry Vanderbilt bestriding railroad lines - with the loose reins of two locomotives in his hands, he looks like a relaxed cowboy (Fig. 20). Vanderbilt was a powerful man, president of the New York Central Railroad, and he dwarfs the small figures of Cyrus West from the New York Elevated Railroad Company and Jay Gould from the Union

Pacific Railroad standing on his feet. The text on the flag over the station in the background carries Field's slogan: "L Road; Many nickles stolen are millions gained".⁹⁸ In 1882 Vanderbilt expressed his hardly democratic view on railroad business to the *Chicago Daily News*, quoted here from Scully's article on Cecil Rhodes: "The railroads are not run for the benefit of the 'dear public' - that cry is all nonsense - but they are built by men who invest their money and expect to get a fair percentage on the same".⁹⁹

The colossus figure played a somewhat different though still unflattering role in connection with the silk strike in

92 Smylitopoulos 2008, 42, fig. 2.

93 Stephens & George 1870-1954, no. 15365.

94 Scully 2012, 126.

95 Cf. also McFarlane 2007.

96 Muringaniza 2011, 318.

97 Muringaniza 2011, 322.

98 "The Modern Colossus of (Rail) Roads", drawing by Joseph Keppler, *Puck Magazine* VI, no. 44, December 1879.

99 Scully 2012, 129.

Paterson, New Jersey in 1913. The strike broke out with the introduction of high-speed automatic looms, causing intolerable working conditions. The colossus is a corpulent figure representing the textile industry, striding on crumpled sheets of paper inscribed with its injustices: free speech, right of assembly, child labour and unstable leaders. On the banner he holds up are written the names of the representatives of the Industrial Workers who organised the strike.¹⁰⁰

The concept of the colossus has also made an impact in movies and role-playing games, with titles such as “The Shadow of the Colossus”, “Wolfenstein: the New Colossus” and “Colossus of Rhodes mine craft project”, although these have little to do with the actual Colossus of Rhodes. However, in the “Empire” created in 2013 it reappears as a statue called the Colossus of Sarvos, depicted in a nostalgic Medieval-style costume bestriding the harbour entrance to the city of Sarvos (Fig. 21).¹⁰¹ Here, the pose, the location and also the history of the Colossus of Rhodes are borrowed from the real Rhodian colossus: it is erected as a monument to commemorate the liberation of the imaginary city of Sarvos and those who died in its defence.

During the late 19th century the colossus also entered the advertisement business, specifically for the London Electrical Supply Corporation.¹⁰² What we today would call a poster bearing the title “THE MODERN COLOSSUS STEPS FROM THE GROSVENOR GALLERY TO DEPTFORD” shows a young male dressed in a Greco-Roman inspired garment who very appropriately holds up an electrical bulb in his right hand, thus repeating the Medieval fusion of the Rhodes Colossus and the Alexandrian Pharos (Fig. 22). Grosvenor Gallery in Mayfair was among the first buildings to install electric lighting and a powerplant was built on the site. As the demand for electricity grew, a larger power generator was built at Deptford in 1884.¹⁰³ Staying in the realm of illumination the colossus has had a certain impact, for instance on the design of electric pylons, like the DOMA’s Colossus power tower in Buenos Aires, where neon lights underline its facial features and the heart.¹⁰⁴ Another artistic and much more ambitious pylon project is the so-called “Land of Giants” project submitted by the Choi + Shine Architects in the “High-Voltage Pylon Competition” on Iceland in 2008 (Fig. 23). The 150-foot tall pylons shaped like moving human figures and adjustable to changes in the landscape were to be made of steel, glass and concrete. The project received an award in 2010, but was not realised.¹⁰⁵



Fig. 22. “The Modern Colossus. Steps from the Grosvenor Gallery to Deptford”. The Prospectus of London Supply Corporation Advert in Electrical Plant, May 1889. British Library.

It is interesting to note that the Rhodes Colossus in its fallen state has not been a favourite motif of modern Greek political cartoons.¹⁰⁶ Talalay’s survey of Western newspaper cartoons from 2010 to 2012 commenting on the Greek crises lists the Parthenon as the most popular theme, while the Colossus of Rhodes is not even mentioned.¹⁰⁷ But that does not mean that the statue has sunk into oblivion in Greece. The Colossus of Rhodes Project was proposed in 2015, with ambitions to create a tourist attraction (Fig. 24). The structure is to be constructed striding across the harbour piers of the city of Rhodes, allowing ships to sail between its legs as in the Renaissance images. It

Fig. 23. "Land of Giants". Project on Iceland. Photo courtesy: Choi + Shine Architects.



is projected to stand 500 feet tall in steel, concrete and bronze-coloured solar panels, and holding a museum, a library and shops. It is furthermore to be crowned by a lighthouse, thus repeating the confusion with the Alexandrian lighthouse.¹⁰⁸ The project depends on private donations and international fundraising in order to revive the cultural significance of the island of Rhodes and to create an emblem of globalisation.¹⁰⁹

The Colossus of Rhodes deserves to be called a survivor. Its image has been adapted to changing situations and requirements, and it would figure high on a list ranking the impact of ancient monuments through time. The Colossus was not commented on in Antiquity because it was an outstanding piece of art, created with perfect proportions and laudable artistic input. The brief statement that Chares from Lindos, a pupil of Lysippos, made it leaves the impression that this information was merely considered interesting because it brought the statue into the orbit of the famous sculptor Lysippos. Ancient commentators instead focused upon the size of the statue, its technical aspects, and not least how much it cost.

Another intriguing aspect seems to have been that it was toppled by an earthquake shortly after it was erected and it thus "died young". Over the years it has appeared in various contexts, particularly political and religious ones,

100 "Uncle Sam Ruled Out", drawing by Art Young, *Solidarity*, 7 June 1913.

101 "The Colossus of Sarvos", Link: https://www.profounddecisions.co.uk/empire-wiki/Construct_the_Colossus_of_Sarvos (accessed 17 December 2018).

102 Link: <https://www.naturphilosophie.co.uk/spark-not-brief-history-life-electricity/> (accessed 18 December 2018)

103 S. Tomkin, *MAILONLINE*, 25 September 2015.

104 "S.A. Rogers, Power Tower Transforms into Robot: DOMA's Neon Colossus", *Web Urbanist. Architectur, Art, Design & Built Environments*.

105 Link: <http://www.arthereandnow.com/the-electrical-colossus-ascends-icelandic-peaks/> (accessed 18 December 2018)

106 Hamilakis 2000.

107 Talalay 2013.

108 <http://colossusrhodes.com>

109 *The Guardian online*, 27 December 2015.

and it has furthermore proved itself useful in new contexts such as satire, commerce and construction, adapting to the trends of the western world as they unfolded. It should not be forgotten, though, that it is the late Medieval and Renaissance image that inspired these later reproductions and even the recently proposed tourist project on Rhodes. Until the availability of modern construction methods, the erection of such a statue would have been impossible; but evidently the idea of sailing between the legs of a huge statue like this has held and still holds some fascination. The original statue remains a myth, which is probably its strongest asset, making it widely accessible, and so far there seems no reason to think that it will lapse into oblivion. Only the future will show in what guises and contexts it will live on or re-appear.



Fig. 24. "The Colossus of Rhodes Project". Photo courtesy: Colossus of Rhodes Project.