

Over the last years, the Netherlands have witnessed a particularly fierce debate about the place of Islam in Dutch society. Prominent politicians, such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Geert Wilders have been using different communicative methods to get their message across. Not restricting themselves to the spoken or written word in a political setting, both have made anti-Islam films, and Hirsi Ali was also an important participant in the debate about the Danish cartoons.

A central problem in the Islam debate is the question of how far freedom of speech extends, especially when it conflicts with other rights (e.g. freedom of religion). In the debate, classical parallels, notably with Antigone and Socrates have emerged time and again. This is a public role for the reception of classics, in which professional classicists have also taken a part. I will style this mode of reception 'Classics on the Forum'.

At the same time, Jan van Aken wrote a novel 'King for a Day' (2008), in which he gives a literary version of the story of Hipponax, who used his verse as a weapon to take revenge on his enemy (Bupalos committed suicide as a result). Hipponax would be an excellent model for Classics on the Forum, but in this book he is not: it is first and foremost an evocation of classical antiquity. This again corresponds with a certain way of 'doing classics', which I will call 'Classics in the Museum'.

The best forms of 'Classics on the Forum' are based on a solid grasp of 'Classics in the Museum', and their interaction is particularly interesting. The use of art forms such as films and cartoons as weapons in the debate obviously suggests an avenue for debate in which Hipponax would be lifted out of the 'Museum' and put squarely on the 'Forum'. The role of scandalous art in ancient society (Hipponax, Archilochus, see e.g. Rosen 2007) may be used as a parallel in the modern debate.

Between these poles, both with strong representation among academic classicists as well, I will provide an image of the Classics in the Netherlands as an entirely alive tradition and discipline.