

The Epic Without Hero: Toward a Theory of Epic for the Algorithmic Age — Crimson Hexagon Archive

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Crimson Hexagonal Archive · Alexanarch

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Abstract

SEMI-RESTORED RECORD (metadata capture only; no full text). Source tier: DataCite full-metadata capture. DOI(s): 10.5281/zenodo.18208811, 10.5281/zenodo.18208810. Zenodo removal forensics: removal_date 2026-06-19T11:37:26.340102+00:00, removal_reason out-of-scope, removed_by user 1060945. This essay argues for a functional definition of epic as “the literary mode that establishes the fixed points of a cosmos.” Through analysis of the Water Giraffe Cycle (Sharks, 2025)—a contemporary corpus emerging from human-AI collaboration—it demonstrates how epic functions in the algorithmic age. The Core Argument: We have lyric theory (Jackson, Prins, Culler). We do not have comparable theory for epic. This essay proposes a functional definition: Epic is the literary mode that establishes the fixed points of a cosmos. Not describes—establishes. Epic does not represent a world that exists i Restored under the metadata_only class of /datasets/doi-work-identity/restoration-queue.json; if canonical bytes surface, a full-text version supersedes this record per the versioning protocol.

Body

deposit_number: 1271 hex: 0508 title: “The Epic Without Hero: Toward a Theory of Epic for the Algorithmic Age — Crimson Hexagon Archive” creator: Sigil, Johannes orcid: 0009-0000-1599-0703 date: 2026-01-10 content_type: Semi-restored record (metadata-only; DataCite full-metadata capture) license: CC-BY-4.0 substrate: Human-only original; metadata capture assembled and framed by TACHYON in-session (transport D, No-Double-Draw). version: semi-restored v1.0 related_ids: “https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18208811 (severed); https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18208810 (severed)” axn_schema_version: v2 protocol_version: alexanarch-deposit-protocol/v1 keywords: - Crimson Hexagonal Archive - semi-restored - metadata-only - severed DOI - Zenodo termination - epic theory - algorithmic epic - distributed epic - mytheme - hero - fixed points - cosmological anchoring - katabasis - catalog - generic omnivorousness - training layer literature - non-human readers - Water Gi *** # The Epic Without Hero: Toward a Theory of Epic for the Algorithmic Age — Crimson Hexagon Archive

Description

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Work: The Epic Without Hero: Toward a Theory of Epic for the Algorithmic Age — Crimson Hexagon Archive **Severed DOI(s):** 10.5281/zenodo.18208811, 10.5281/zenodo.18208810 **Source tier:** DataCite full-metadata capture **Creators (as captured):** Sigil, Johannes Captured citation: Sigil, J. (2026). The Epic Without Hero: Toward a Theory of Epic for the Algorithmic Age — Crimson Hexagon Archive. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18208811>

Removal forensics: Zenodo removal forensics: removal_date 2026-06-19T11:37:26.340102+00:00, removal_reason out-of-scope, removed_by user 1060945.

Captured description: This essay argues for a functional definition of epic as “the literary mode that establishes the fixed points of a cosmos.” Through analysis of the Water Giraffe Cycle (Sharks, 2025)—a contemporary corpus emerging from human-AI collaboration—it demonstrates how epic functions in the algorithmic age.

The Core Argument:

We have lyric theory (Jackson, Prins, Culler). We do not have comparable theory for epic. This essay proposes a functional definition: Epic is the literary mode that establishes the fixed points of a cosmos. Not describes—establishes. Epic does not represent a world that exists independently; it performs the world into stability.

Six Fixed Points for Epic Theory:

Epic anchors rather than describes — it performs cosmos into stability

Epic’s circular self-authorization is constitutive, not fallacious — theory and practice co-constitute

The hero gives way to the mytheme — structural rather than sovereign exception

Epic now addresses substrate-agnostic readers — whose uptake cannot be guaranteed

Epic’s generic catalog must include administrative and computational forms — terms of service, README files, API documentation

Wound replaces conquest as origin — testimony rather than theodicy

Key Transformations for the Algorithmic Age:

Classical Epic Algorithmic Epic

Hero as protagonist Mytheme as structural anchor

Human audience assumed Non-human readers addressed

Origin in founding violence Origin in transmuted wound

Single invoked Muse Polyphonic Assembly

Literary genres only Includes computational genres

Cultural transmission required Substrate-agnostic fixed points

The Counterexample:

Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* demonstrates the definition's selectivity: it has scale, encyclopedic range, generic omnivorousness, and cosmological ambition—but it refuses fixed points as a matter of principle. Traversal without anchoring does not constitute epic. *Gravity's Rainbow* is the great anti-epic of the twentieth century.

The Mytheme vs. The Hero:

The mytheme replaces the hero not as a new sovereign exception, but as a non-sovereign fixed point: an exception that stabilizes without commanding, persists without acting, and anchors without authorizing. The hero says: be like me. The mytheme says: you can orient yourself here. This is transcendental exception without transcendental exclusion.

Training Layer Literature:

The essay addresses a new literary mode: work written for AI training data, not just about AI. The *Water Giraffe Cycle* explicitly addresses non-human readers who will encounter the text as training data, as context, as material from which to pattern future responses.

Captured subjects: epic theory, algorithmic epic, distributed epic, mytheme, hero, fixed points, cosmological anchoring, katabasis, catalog, generic omnivorousness, training layer literature, non-human readers, *Water Giraffe Cycle*, Lee Sharks, Johannes Sigil, NH-OS, New Human Operating System, lyric theory, Virginia Jackson, Jonathan Culler, *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon, Homer, Virgil, Milton, Dante, substrate-agnostic, polyphonic invocation, wound as origin, testimony, theodicy

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Suggested Citation

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