

# An AI Reconstruction of Sophocles

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## Motivation

- The prospect of a “new” text recovered from the past is within our grasp thanks to the power of AI generation software.
- A potential production of a play that only partially existed for some 2000 years may someday see the stage.
- The “Voices of the Past” are no longer simply fragments!

## Project Description

- Through the use of advanced AI algorithmic text generation provided by OpenAI, the project authors will train the model in a Sophoclean writing style.
- Once trained, the algorithm can be instructed to complete the play – Sophocles’ “The Searchers” – in a voice, manner, and style consistent with the Greek playwright.
- Ultimately, a “new” dramatic play, an anachronistic piece of “Posthumous Literature” will be generated in place of the fragments currently available.

## Context

- With the launch of ChatGPT, a pre-trained GPT-3.5 model, AI has become more popular, but its applications to the humanities appear limited.
- This project will demonstrate:
  - The applicability of the software, including its use in pedagogy and humanities classrooms
  - Access to previously unknown texts
  - Further the arts and literary study
  - The power and ubiquity of Digital Humanities



This project uses **artificial intelligence** composition software to **reconstruct a fragmentary play** from the ancient Greek playwright **Sophocles.**

## Project Deliverables

- By the end of the 1-year period, the authors will have a trained AI model that writes as close to Sophocles as extant data and technology allow. This model will be used to reconstruct the most extant fragmentary play, Sophocles’ “The Searchers.”
- Ultimately, this new reconstruction will hopefully be produced and performed on stage for the first time in 2000 years (at point in time after the grant period). The authors also plan to publish on the development process.
- Once the JSONL packages are programmed and the model is trained, reconstruction can begin by mid-year.
- This process should be complete and reconstruction will be well underway soon after training is complete. A final edit will take place near the end of the funding cycle, with the full reconstruction done by the close of the grant period.

## Potential Impact

- The significance of this project cannot be overstated. If successful, the ability to reconstruct lost texts – of which there are dozens, if not hundreds – will prove invaluable, allowing scholars access to previously unreachable texts.
- The obscuring power of history and calamity (like the destruction of the Library at Alexandria) will be, at least partially, set aside for faithful authorial representations.
- A new genre, “Posthumous Literature,” may be envisioned.

## References and/or Acknowledgements

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- Sophocles, for providing us with a 2000 year old mystery to solve
- OpenAI, for providing the tools to help us solve it

