

Fandom and the Ancient World International Conference

October 4-5, 2024

Radboud University, Nijmegen and online



Fandom and the Ancient World Conference

Programme October 4th - In Person in Nijmegen

Erasmus building room E. 9.14

- 10:00 Welcome and introductory paper – Julia Neugarten
- 10:30 **Panel 1 Fanfiction, history and mythology**
- Franziska Pannach - *Rape, Murder, and Death in Fanfiction Adaptations of Mythological Narratives in the Classical Domain: A Frame-Semantic Analysis*
- Saskia T. Roselaar - *Slavery and citizenship in fanfiction on The Eagle of the Ninth*
- 11:20 Coffee/Tea Break
- 11:40 **Panel 2: Ancient and modern texts as fanfiction**
- Marieke E. Fleck – *Ovid's Heroides in a fan fiction perspective*
- Jo Messore – *Atlantis and Numenor: Exploring classical reception in speculative fiction as a form of fan fiction*
- 12:30 **Panel 3: Online and musical fandom**
- Sheridan Marsh – *Patrochilles, the Internet, and the Racial Aesthetics of Queerness*
- Yanxiao He – *Lucian's De Saltatione as a Pantomime Fan Text: Understanding De Saltatione through Classical Receptions in K-pop Choreography*
- 13:20-13:30 ROOM CHANGE: to Erasmus building room E. 3.29**
- 13:30 Lunch
- 14:20 **Panel 4: Ships and beyond**
- Artemisa Loesburg – *The Smothering Mother: The Hades/Persephone Ship as Offspring of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter.*
- Amanda Potter – Response to the day and future areas for research
- 15:10 Break/Discussion time
- 15:30 **Character creation workshop – Lillie Nadeau**
- 17:00 Drinks at the Cultuurcafe (Mercatorpad 1) on campus
- 19:30 Optional self-paid dinner at [Pizza Cafe DESEM](#) (Smetiusstraat 7) in Nijmegen

Programme October 5th – Online, Netherlands Time

10:00 **Panel 1: Published fiction and fandom**

Alicia Matz – *Fanfiction and the Canon in Elodie Harper’s The Wolf Den Trilogy*

Susan Haskins – *Apollo as Sexual Predator in Sherrilyn Kenyon’s Styxx*

Chiara Torrisi – *How fiction boosts the research of antiquity*

11:15 Break

11:30 **Panel 2: Female characters and fandom**

Connie Skibinski – *Monstrous Man-killer to Sympathetic Daughter: Fannish Engagement with Supernatural’s Amazon Emma*

Daniel Theodorou – *“Octavia stared for a moment, before she stepped into Servilia’s embrace”: Receiving Rome in Contemporary Lesbian/Queer Female Fanfiction*

12:20 Lunch break

13:30 **Panel 3: Cult-Religion and Intersectionality – 2 short papers**

Evan Shannon – *Homeric Heroes to Hollywood Stars*

Matt Shinnick – *Hades the Romantic: Shifting Depictions of the Rape of Persephone in Fanfiction*

14:10 **Panel 4: Games and Stories**

Katharine McCain – *‘Thank you for your feedback and support!’: Canonized Transformation in Hades II*

Anastasia Zabalueva – *Cultural Dynamics in “Cardamon”: Critiquing Colonialism and Racism in Classical Archaeology*

15:00 Break

15:15 **Panel 5 – Ancient writers and fanfiction**

Gina White – *Cicero the Fanboy: can real person fanfiction help us to understand Cicero’s dialogues*

Kris Fletcher – *The Complementarity of Fandom Studies and Classical Reception: Vergil as a Case Study*

16:05 Julia Neugarten and Amanda Potter – Response to the day and wrap up

16:30 **‘Ask Me Anything’ session with Henry Jenkins**

18:00 Close

Conference Information

For this hybrid conference we have scheduled all the in-person speakers on day one, and the online speakers on day two. We hope that this will allow for networking and for discussion to be centred in the room on day one, although an option to join online will also be available for people who are not speaking on that day. Day two will offer an online conference experience, which will allow more people to join from outside Europe. For the in-person speakers in Nijmegen who have been in touch with us about this, we have a conference room available in Nijmegen on the online day. This room is located at the Guesthouse Vertoef, Nassausingel 3, a 4-minute walk from Nijmegen Central Station.

The conference is paperless. Presenters are encouraged to upload their PowerPoints and any additional material they want to share to our [shared Dropbox folder](#).

Travel Information

The face-to-face element of the conference will take place in the Erasmus building at Radboud University.

<https://www.ru.nl/en/about-us/the-campus/buildings-and-spaces/erasmus-building>

Buses run regularly from Nijmegen Station to the Erasmus building (stop: Erasmusgebouw). You can take bus number 10 in the direction of Heyendaal.

The Cultuurcafé, our location for drinks, is a 3-minute walk from the Erasmus building.

If you are joining us for dinner at Pizza Café DESEM, take bus 10 back to Nijmegen station and the restaurant will be a 6-minute walk from there.

Wifi on campus

The university has eduroam.

People without access to eduroam can send a text message to the following number on the day of the conference: +316 3574 4774. The text should say ‘65ru’. They will then receive login info for eduroam that will be valid for the duration of the day.

Zoom Details

Day One

<https://liverpool-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/92114490808?pwd=hHPLk2eyDdmP1toWE364BfztaLOGdP.1>

Meeting ID: 921 1449 0808

Passcode: !d8wN*%v

Day Two

<https://liverpool-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/94964477991?pwd=vXxcXmktcUy2738bh2QFFttdxPbrmq.1>

Meeting ID: 949 6447 7991

Passcode: @i2Ny#UA

Abstracts in presenter alphabetical order:

Marieke Eleonore Fleck, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Ovid's *Heroides* in a fan fiction perspective

Ovid's collection of letters, the *Heroides*, in which famous heroines beg their absent lovers to return to them, can easily be looked at from a fan fiction perspective. The letters are based on various texts by Ovid's famous predecessors including, among others, Euripides, Callimachus, Virgil, Sophocles, and Homer. The ancient readers, being familiar with the works of these canonical authors, were likely to spot the numerous parallels between Ovid's *Heroides* and the preexisting literature and read the letters in the context of intertextuality. Yet, I want to show that fan fiction is so much more than just intertextuality. The *Heroides* consciously seek new ways of thinking about the canonical myths by adding counterfactual perspectives to the text. Those scenarios are counterfactual in respect to the original text and sometimes also to the letter's own reality. Presented through fears, hopes and thoughts of the heroines, they offer alternative plots of the well-known myths and, in most cases, imply a completely different ending, should the addressee actually receive the letter and decide to take pity on their lover and return to them. So, Ovid's 'fan fiction' does not only consist of diligent work with the source texts, he also, by adding counterfactual scenarios and not giving the stories a definite plot and ending, implies alternative versions of traditional myths. The *Heroides* even inspired more fan fiction to be written. Sabinus, one of Ovid's friends, actually wrote answers to Ovid's letters from the male hero's perspective. Interestingly, Sabinus seems to have written positive as well as negative answers to the letters. So, he has, induced by Ovid's epistles, indeed varied from the traditional endings of the myths, at least in some cases, and, thereby, probably created major plot changes. The fan fiction perspective thus sheds further light on the reader-writer-interaction.

Kris Fletcher, Louisiana State University

The Complementarity of Fandom Studies and Classical Reception: Vergil as a Case Study

This paper will use the reception of Vergil as a case study to show how the intersection of Classics and Fandom Studies can be mutually beneficial to both disciplines.

Scholarly terms such as "intertextuality" and "reception" run the risk of presenting every author's use of their predecessors as a calculating and bloodless interaction. But viewing instances of ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance receptions of Vergil through the lens of Fandom Studies allows us to highlight something rarely considered in Classical treatments of how one ancient text uses another text: emotion. At the same time, our knowledge of the responses to Vergil by famous and influential authors is a testament to something too often ignored or minimized in Fandom Studies: aesthetic quality. Not all expressions of fandom are created equal.

Examples to be considered include: Ovid's discussion of the poets he viewed as gods while a young poet himself (*Tristia* 4.10.41–56); Silius Italicus' devotion to celebrating Vergil's birthday (Pliny, *Epistulae* 3.7.8); Dante's adoration of Vergil (esp. *Inferno* 1.79–87); Petrarch's letter to Vergil (*Familiars* 24.11); and Maffeo Vegio's *Aeneidos Liber XIII*. This paper will also include details from

the ancient biographies of Vergil that further testify to fannish behavior (such as people hounding him in the streets, *VSD* 11) and show that it was not limited to one social class.

Reading such texts simultaneously through the disciplines of Classics and Fandom Studies show how the two approaches complement each other. The appearance of recognizable fan behavior at such an early stage attests to its prevalence and connects it with some of the most influential texts of all time, while also providing an important reminder that intertextuality and reception stem in no small part from an emotional response to an earlier text.

Susan L. Haskins, University of Pretoria

Apollo as Sexual Predator in Sherrilyn Kenyon's *Styx*

Apollo, god of poetry, music, truth, the Sun and light, healing and plagues, dutiful son, abusive brother, control freak, megalomaniac, vampire creator, sexual sadist!?

Sherrilyn Kenyon's¹ college immersion into the world and characters of Greek and Roman mythology led to her creating one of the most expansive and popular fantasy worlds in the genre of paranormal romance, the Dark-Hunter world. Ostensibly a 'vampire' series, the 'backbone of [this] ... fictitious world' (Kenyon, nd) is Apollo, the ultimate creator of the vampire villains. He is mostly unseen throughout the series until he appears as the main antagonist himself in the novel *Styx* (Kenyon, 2013), as the sadistic, long-term rapist of the titular character.

This character is so unlike any conceptualisation of Apollo from any ancient texts, even the Apollo in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, that I always assumed his name (along with his twin relationship with Artemis), were simply used as literary devices. However, two circumstances have led me to re-evaluate this modern Apollo as a possibly received character. Firstly, during a class in which I asked my students to draw out some common elements from myths of Apollo, my students surprised me by describing an Apollo not dissimilar to that created by Kenyon; vengeful, spiteful and dangerous. Secondly, Jenkins' theories on motivations for the writing of fan fiction, such as fans 'developing interests not sufficiently explored' in the canon (Jenkins 2013, 162), and the concept of the meta-text which informs fan writing (Jenkins 2013, 101, 155, 156), make sense of Kenyon's reception of the ancient sources and her use of Apollo in a way which traditional textual reception studies does not. Therefore, in this paper I will establish Kenyon as a fan writer. I will then examine Kenyon's characterisation of Apollo as a sexual predator and how and why she might have come to extrapolate this idea from her interactions with, and interpretations of, the ancient sources in relation to her own fictional 'fan' world.

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Jenkins, Henry (2013) *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* 2nd ed. New York & London: Routledge

Kenyon, Sherrilyn (nd) *Kenyon FAQ By Interviewers (Sherrilyn Kenyon Interview)*
<https://www.sherrilykenyon.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/-interview%20for%20site.pdf> (Last Accessed 27 June 2024)

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¹ Note: I am aware that this author now goes by her maiden name of McQueen but as she publishes the series in question as Kenyon, I have used Kenyon here to avoid confusion.

Yanxiao He, Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences, Tsinghua University, Beijing

Lucianic K-pop: K-pop Cover Dance, Midas in K-pop, and Classical Fandom

Youjeong Oh's 2018 book *Pop City: Korean Popular Culture and the Selling of Place*, which explores how Korean popular culture has inspired global fans to make pilgrimages to Korea, sparked my thoughts on its resemblance to Classics-driven tours to Italy and Greece. Joy Connolly's 2022 article---on Cicero's philhellenism as a form of fandom culture while questioning the extent to which the discipline of Classics itself can be considered a fandom culture---shows the potential of this comparison

In this paper, inspired by Lucian's *De Saltatione*, a text that justifies pantomime dance as a serious cultural pursuit akin to Greek sophistry, I highlight the similarity between two seemingly distinct cultures: Classics and K-pop cover dance. Echoing Lucian's efforts to conceptualize Greek sophistry as a performance industry like pantomime, I question to what extent Classics training resembles K-pop cover dance.

Drawing upon my two-year fieldwork on K-pop cover dance in China, with *De Saltatione* in mind, I first highlight the similarity between K-pop cover dance and Classics training: recognizing a passage from a Classical text and translating it; recognizing a segment of a K-pop song and reproducing its corresponding choreography. Then, resembling Lucian's use of Ajax to illustrate the function of pantomime fandom, I analyze a recent classical reception in the K-pop hit song "Midas Touch." I show how it deploys the Midas story to make a meta-choreographic comment on K-pop's gestural point choreography, which makes K-pop dance reproducible. I then reflect on how modern and contemporary philologists produce signature texts and passages to make them reproducible in Classics training. Lastly, I underscore the urgency of re-reading Lucian's *De Saltatione* in the social media age, as it is the first text to use popular culture as a lens to reflect on intellectuals.

Artemisa Loesburg, University of Utrecht

The Smothering Mother: The Hades/Persephone Ship as Offspring of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

The retold version of the myth focusing on Persephone and Hades has been increasingly popular the past years. It has become as prevalent in popular culture as to be widely used as a trope within fanfiction and fanart pertaining to widely diverse fandoms. Within fandom, the story has been taken up either out of enthusiasm for certain aspects of the main pairing, or in an effort to return agency to Persephone.

The original hymn, as an aetiological myth, has an obvious function. It is furthermore a deeply moving story of a grief-struck mother. No matter the importance of Persephone, in the hymn she can barely be argued to be the deuteragonist. Fandom then, has re-envisioned the myth to be a romance, which does put the focus back on Persephone. It also raises the questions what it does, not just to the characterization of Demeter, Hades and Persephone, but to the original religious context.

In order to raise a discussion this presentation will first look at Tumblr discourse within the Hades/Persephone tag and affiliated tags. It will then offer an analysis of a limited number of retellings of the pairing, selected based on discourse prompted within the fandom, and their recurrent characterization of the Big Three (Demeter, Persephone, Hades). It will focus especially on 'fandom' elements within these re-tellings such as the breaking down of both marketing and story structure into tropes and, in the case of the last three, the queerization of the pairing. Finally, it briefly touches on

how discourse within the fandom has led to attempts, both ongoing and finalized, to go full circle and return focus to Demeter.

Sheridan Marsh, University of Pennsylvania

Patrochilles, the Internet, and the Racial Aesthetics of Queerness

This paper explores the racialized depiction of Patrochilles in fanart and its intersection with contemporary visions of queerness and queer aesthetics. Patrochilles – the portmanteau “ship-name” for the romantic relationship between Patroclus and Achilles – has been one of the most popular subjects from Greek mythology in Internet fanart. The explosion of interest in Patrochilles can be traced to the heyday of Tumblr fan culture in the 2010s, where Madeline Miller’s best-selling 2012 novel *The Song of Achilles* had a sizeable fandom that continues to be active. At the same time, these social media sites had also become loci for queer discourse and formative places for young queer people exploring their sexual orientations and gender identities. In that vein, Achilles and Patroclus’ relationship had become a popular model of a historical queer relationship. With these two phenomena often interacting with each other and reaching the same audiences, it is worth examining how fanart of Achilles and Patroclus both reflects and informs contemporary queer discourse in its visualizations. conceptions of themselves. This paper focuses on the racial dynamics of their representation which furthers a White norm within primarily American-based/Anglophone queer culture. I trace the iconographic development of Patrochilles fanart in which Achilles is consistently depicted as a White, blond male whereas Patroclus is often represented as an ethnically ambiguous tan-to-dark-skinned Brown man. I analyze this iconographic pattern through the lens of intersectional race and queer theory, specifically using sociologist C. Winter Han’s interpretation of the modern gay erotic habitus that is centered on desire for Whiteness. I argue that fanart of Patrochilles participates in the construction of this erotic habitus by centering Achilles and portraying him as the epitome of desire and Patroclus as a lower-status admirer, perpetuating the hierarchy of racial desire between gay men that elevates the White partner.

Alicia Matz, San Diego State University

‘Fanfiction’ and the Canon in Elodie Harper’s *The Wolf Den* Trilogy

Thomas defines fanfiction as “fan-created narratives” that “take the pre-existing storyworld in a new, sometimes bizarre, direction” (Thomas 2011, 1). In addition, fanfiction creates “information worlds that challenge common discourse” (Floegel 2020, 785). In this paper, I will examine recent increase novels set in the ancient world through the lens of fan fiction, using Elodie Harper’s *The Wolf Den* (2021) and *The House with the Golden Door* (2022) as a case study. By focalizing the ancient world through the viewpoint of an enslaved prostitute (Amara), Harper challenges the ‘common discourse’ put forward by the ‘storyworld’ found in canonical Latin texts.

First, I will examine how the idea of ‘fanfiction’ can help scholars of the ancient world create accessible and informative ways of introducing non-expert audiences to the ancient world, and show how Harper’s books are a good example. Harper uses a mix of material evidence and quotations from canonical texts to recreate the lives of “ordinary Romans” (Knapp 2013, 3). The immersion in the

ancient world created by this combination of material and literary evidence challenges the idea that the ancient world is exactly as represented by canonical literature. For example, Amara must alter her behavior many times to fit into the expectations of the upper class man she is acting as courtesan for as well as Pliny, who rents her for a week. In addition, rather than depicting Amara meekly accepting her fate, Harper shows how she and her fellow she-wolves strive to break the cycle of oppression.

Selected Bibliography

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Katharine McCain, Delaware Valley Friends School

'Thank you for your feedback and support!': Canonized Transformation in Hades II

In *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context*, Sheenagh Pugh introduces fic as having a "very long tradition," one that derives from ancient myth where characters "[change] according to what each set of new readers and listeners needs from it" (9). Though one's definition of fanfiction can vary widely depending on the existence of an author(s), the medium, and the canon's copyright status, every potential fic shares the same status as a transformative work. In acknowledging fanfiction as a kind of living text, one that is forever capable of transformation as opposed to being singularly transformed, it is unsurprising then that Greek and Roman mythology would prove to be an appealing basis for many fans' works, leading to thousands of fics for books like the Percy Jackson series, webcomics like *Lore Olympus*, and shows like *Xena: Warrior Princess*.

Thus, this presentation will examine one particular text based on Greek mythology that resides within that gray definition of "fanfiction": *Hades II* by Supergiant Games. Released for Early Access in May of 2024, this roguelike sequel has been presented to the public in an unfinished state because, in the

words of the publisher, they value ongoing feedback and intend to implement fan ideas into "every aspect" of the game. Indeed, by the second patch players have had a profound influence on the game's construction, a kind of semi-authorial transformation that exists alongside fans' ability to interact with the game itself, crafting unique stories based on the genre's choice-based mechanics. Adding to a growing conversation regarding what may count as "fanfiction" and the limits of the medium, this presentation will explore *Hades II*'s potential status as a "fic" given its mythological roots, the influence of Early Access, and fans' ability to manipulate the text post-publication.

Jo Messore, University of Exeter

Atlantis and Numenor: Exploring classical reception in speculative fiction as a form of fanfiction

Fanfiction is often conceptualised as transformative work, which takes characters or elements from a canonical source and reimagines them in new settings and narratives that are of relevance or inspiration for the fanfiction author. This is, in effect the same process we see within many examples of classical reception in speculative fiction (SF), where Greco-Roman figures, societies, architecture and more -both historical and mythical- are borrowed, reimagined, or reinterpreted into new fantastical fictional worlds. Using the island of Numenor in the *legendarium* of J.R.R. Tolkien as a case study, this paper will argue for how classical reception in SF can be understood itself as form of fanfiction. By reframing this reception in the genre as one driven by the author's love and investment in the ancient world, we can provide new perspectives on the use of the classical reception and how emotional ties to the classics underscores the engagement between the ancient world, SF authors, and their audiences.

This paper will explore the parallels between Plato's Atlantis and Tolkien's Numenor; both being islands of advanced societies with great naval empires who in their hubris draw the ire of the gods, ultimately resulting in the drowning and destruction of both. In exploring these parallels, I will show Tolkien's personal knowledge of, and relationship with, the Greco-Roman world. I will how by considering the emotional 'fannish' connection that inspires this reception, we as an audience gain a greater understanding of the emotional underpinning of the fictional world. As arguably the founder of the epic fantasy genre, Tolkien's work has enduring influence and popularity. This paper will highlight how understanding Tolkien as a fan of the ancient world reflects a broader transmission and appreciation of the ancient world in the popular consciousness and aims to provoke new consideration on how we critically analyse that.

Lillie Nadeau, University of Toronto

Roleplaying as an Academic: Tabletop RPGs, Fandom, and Pedagogy.

The collaborative storytelling that is inherent to tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Call of Cthulhu*, or *Pathfinder* reveals one of many influential manifestations of fan culture and its connection to Classics. Since the 1970s, these games have opened up space for passionate fans to work together, creating moving and powerful stories. While there is no shortage of these stories that find their content influenced by the Classical world, this project aims to take a different approach, by looking at the act of roleplaying itself, and its influence on pedagogy.

The project first aims to break down the barriers that distinguish between the TTRPG space and academia, positing that both are "fannish" endeavours, that focus on identity building and negotiation, as well as collaborative narrative building. This is clear when we examine the sociological definitions

and functions of subcultures, and apply directly to the “subculture” of academia. By thinking of ourselves as role-players and collaborators, we open up new avenues for thinking about ancient literature and history, as well as new ways to pique student interest.

The project will include a discussion of my own D&D one-shot “Heist at the Museum,” which was designed as an exploration of museum ethics, the antiquities trade, and the institution of Classics through a single-session game of Dungeons & Dragons. Combined with new analysis of works such as *Dungeons and Dragons and Philosophy* and *Strictly Fantasy: The Cultural roots of Table-Top Role-Playing Games*, this project serves as a case study in how TTRPGs can be a fruitful pedagogical device as we move to keep Classics relevant in the modern era. The presentation will also include a 45-minute interactive session, in which participants will create Level 1 D&D characters based on Classical figures, and discuss how TTRPG mechanics can be employed in the classroom in innovative and creative ways.

Franziska Pannach, Centre for Language and Cognition (CLCG), Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Rape, Murder, and Death in Fanfiction Adaptations of Mythological Narratives in the Classical Domain: A Frame-Semantic Analysis

Franziska Pannach¹,

Sara Gemelli^{2,3},

Federico Pianzola¹

¹ Centre for Language and Cognition, University of Groningen

² University of Bergamo

³ University of Pavia

The work presented in this contribution investigates how mythological characters in fanfiction works die and which role gender-based violence plays in their demise. In the classical domain, death is an omnipresent narrative device, illustrating the wrath of gods, the gruesome outcome of human despair, lost love, jealousy and hate. It is the ultimate metaphor for the darkest human feelings and the resulting horrors that humans have inflicted on each other (and themselves) throughout the ages. Additionally, themes relating to gender-based violence (GBV), like forced sexual intercourse or femicides, and other forms of physical, psychological, and structural violence are prevalent (Seidensticker 2006; Gilhaus 2017; a.o.). At the same time, fannish narratives (often) do not undergo a traditional editorial workflow and are not subjected to censorship. Therefore, explicit and implicit descriptions of characters suffering various forms of violence are common. Hence, fanfiction narratives have a greater potential to allow for a large-scale analysis of GBV-related themes than any other fictional domain on which such analyses have been performed previously (e.g. Morin et al. 2019).

In this study, we investigate if and how those plot devices re-occur in the adaptation of violent themes in fan-produced narratives with a special focus on the “Ancient Greek Religion & Lore” fandom labeled with the content warning “Major Character Death” and “Rape/Non-Con” on Archive of Our Own (Fiesler et al. 2016), which currently yield 1,198 (resp. 641) stories. For that purpose, we employ a mixed-method approach of human annotation and close reading, and frame-semantic parsing using SocioFillmore, a special frame-semantic approach focussed on the analysis of responsibility framing (Minnema et al. 2022), as well as an in-depth data analysis of common user-provided tags and

character pairings. We want to find out if users choose to change the dynamics presented in ancient mythological narratives, or if the modes of harm and violence stay largely unchanged, and hypothesize why either may be the case. For that purpose, a selection of fanfiction stories will be compared to previous work (Pannach 2023, 2024).

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Saskia T. Roselaar, Independent scholar & fanfic reader

Slavery and citizenship in fanfiction on *The Eagle of the Ninth*

Rosemary Sutcliff's 1954 book *The Eagle of the Ninth* has been a favourite among readers for many generations. Its continued popularity was highlighted by the 2011 film, as well as a large body of online fanfiction.

In this paper I will to highlight the experience of slavery and citizenship, as shown in fanfiction about *The Eagle*. On the one hand, fanfiction highlights the lived experience of slavery, focusing on the life of Esca MacCunoval, enslaved after a battle in which his whole family died. Although we know that countless people were enslaved in this way during the expansion of the Roman Empire, it is impossible from the surviving sources to really understand what it was like to suffer this fate. Most sources, such as epitaphs by freedmen, represent a rather optimistic picture of slavery, making it easy to forget the horrors of slavery. Fanfiction does much to improve this picture, focusing the abuse Esca suffers, the effects of this on his mental health, and his internal conflict between loyalty to his master Marcus and his murdered family.

Finally, Esca is rewarded with freedom for his help in retrieving the Eagle. Some great fanfictions focus on the actual manumission process to become a freedman, and on the rights and status that this conferred on Esca, thus bringing to life the Lex Aelia Sentia and other relevant laws. Many fanfictions focus on Esca and Marcus' life after the book/film, with some discussing specifically what life would have been like for a newly created Roman citizen.

Through fanfiction, it is possible to get a better understanding of the lived experience of slavery and life as a *libertus*. Thus, academic and fanfiction engagement can certainly enhance each other in order to deepen our understanding of the ancient world.

Evan Shannon, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Homeric Heroes to Hollywood Stars: The Cult-Religion of Fandom

Emile Durkheim, "Father of Sociology," was one of the first scholars to conceptualize religion academically. He argued that humans gathered and created the sacred, something he defined without mention of supernatural or divine attributes; it was simply that which is set apart from humanity and daily living. The collective gathering, rituals, and shared sacred spaces that have become ingredients of religion can be seen all around us, which leaves one more confused about the meaning of religion than before. Taking a more creative, abstract understanding of religion can help make connections across time and space, showcasing that humans have not changed much in their social structures.

To understand this connection, one can turn to Ancient Greece, where mythology spoke of a great hero named Heracles, son of Zeus and laborer of Eurystheus. Heracles was worshiped after his death in hundreds of cult sites that dot the ancient landscape. Often, these sites were alleged graves, as it was common belief that a physical reminder of the body (e.g., bones) was necessary for the hero site to fully invoke the hero. Humans continue this practice with celebrities that they worship and venerate in similar ways. Marilyn Monroe may not have been believed to be half-divine, yet her fans have dedicated their lives to invoking or emulating her through memorabilia (original and recreated), physical reminders of the body (e.g., hair), and visiting her grave.

After giving a brief overview of the theory of religion, I plan to discuss how fandom and hero cult are two sides of the same coin through a visual tour of objects pulled from both antiquity and the modern age. Through these objects, and the establishment of a religious studies framework, I hope to connect ancient and modern societies through the similar practices of fandom and cult worship.

Matt Shinnick, Georgetown University

Hades the Romantic: Shifting Depictions of the Rape of Persephone In Fanfiction

The study of classics can always be benefitted by intersectionality, especially with fandom studies on fanfiction. This is useful both so that we can understand what modern reinterpretations of myths say about our own society, but also in order to potentially figure out how "fan" response to the original myths might have shaped them. My research uses Fatahallah's method of analysis to look at power relationships in fanfiction on three levels: in the text, within the community, and between the community and professional creators, or "elites". These relationships determine which versions of a story become accepted and widespread within a group, and can even alter the "canon" version of the story. I use Fatahallah's method in order to analyze the power structures involved in both mythological fanfiction, and the original myths themselves, and compare the two.

Specifically, I have focused my thesis on several instances of fanfiction about Hades, Persephone, and their relationship, and comparing it to their ancient depiction from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter.

Hades and Persephone are a popular topic for fanfiction, and their story has seen drastically significant changes in fanfiction, which grants many opportunities for finding contrasts. Hades is now a kind and doting lover, and Persephone is granted agency and power, often *choosing* to go into the Underworld. Fanfiction about their relationship almost always deals with themes of sexual assault and rape, feminism and the patriarchy, and female empowerment. I believe that these tropes are due to the power relationships Fatahallah discusses: fanfiction writers (typically young women) feel powerless to change mass media, and society at large, and are the victims of power imbalance. So, when they write a story, they associate Persephone with themselves, and the dominant Olympians with their own oppressors, who use violent, sexual, and traditional power against their victims.

Connie Skibinski, Australian Catholic University

Monstrous Man-killer to Sympathetic Daughter: Fannish Engagement with *Supernatural*'s Amazon Emma

The *Supernatural* TV series, spanning 2005 – 2020, has attracted a loyal and dedicated fanbase affectionately termed the SPN Family. Fandom scholars consider the SPN Family “a fandom like no other” (Zubernis, 2021), characterized by close communal bonds, convention attendance, and direct engagement in the production of fan art and fanfiction. As the *Supernatural* series draws heavily upon mythology and folklore from various cultures, fan engagement with episodes inspired by Classical Antiquity can be examined as meaningful instances of Classical Reception. By considering fanfiction as a specific form of cultural artefact derived from fannish engagement, scholars can employ a reception theory approach to examine these works as rewritings of Classical material, which shed light on how individuals receive and use pre-existing literature and ideas (Willis, 2018). This presentation examines fanfiction responding to the *Supernatural* episode ‘Slice Girls’ (2012), considering how fan narratives generate new meaning by challenging the established plot of the episode, particularly in relation to the depiction of Amazons.

The plot of ‘Slice Girls’ revolves around Dean’s unwitting role in propagating the Amazon tribe – he is seduced by the Amazon Lydia, who gives birth to Emma, Dean’s biological daughter. As a young Amazon, Emma is told she must kill her father to complete her initiation into adulthood, putting Dean’s life in direct danger. When Emma is defeated, Dean expresses no sympathy for his deceased daughter, referring to her as a “crazy man-killing monster”. This response elicited criticism from the fans of the show, who expected that the heavy emphasis on family throughout the series would prompt Dean to be more sympathetic, especially as Emma acts under coercion and lacks agency. Fans’ interest in Emma’s character can be seen in the 88 works in Archive of Our Own (AO3) under the pairing Emma & Dean Winchester. This paper examines key trends that emerge across these fan narratives, highlighting the tendency to portray Emma as a sympathetic victim of circumstance and/or a conventional awkward adolescent daughter. In presenting Emma in this manner, these narratives subvert the show’s portrayal of Amazons as hostile antagonists, instead reclaiming the positive portrayals of aspirational Amazon characters (such as Wonder Woman) in contemporary media.

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Daniel Theodorou, Durham University

“Octavia stared for a moment, before she stepped into Servilia's embrace”: Receiving Rome in Contemporary Lesbian/Queer Female Fanfiction

Transformation of ancient material has been, and remains, important in the creation and construction of queer identity. Fanfiction presents classics with an opportunity to explore queer reception within a medium that is non-hierarchical, accessible, and free, for both creator and consumer, and therefore potentially uniquely insightful into the intersection between queerness and classics.

This presentation will examine how lesbian/queer female relationships are constructed in ancient Roman Real Person Fiction (RPF). Selected material will come from AO3 and will be chosen based on use of real historical figures and will focus on romantic and sexual relationships between women. This presentation will draw out and examine how authors play and make use of Roman social hierarchy, attitudes towards gender, and attitudes towards sexuality. It will demonstrate the effect that the incorporation of Roman social dynamics and the taboo nature of lesbian relationships can have on fanfiction.

This is an important topic to discuss, not only because it hasn't received attention from scholarship as of yet, but also because analysing the intersection between Roman contemporary queering and RPF has the potential to provide a unique perspective within the world of classical fanfiction. Ingleheart (2015) has demonstrated that Rome, in comparison to Greece, has supplied a more flexible model for those seeking queer ancestors and has appealed to a broader, less elite audience. Additionally, Müller (2020) found that RPF demonstrates an author's connection to a historical figure, through which they explore themselves by placing figures in imaginative new contexts and crafting them to act as role models. This presentation will bring together these ideas and demonstrate the importance of Roman RPF to contemporary lesbian/queer expression and narrative exploration.

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Chiara Torrisi, Book editor & historical advisor

How fiction boosts the research of antiquity

Many antiquity fans trace their initial interest back to their youth, influenced significantly by stories.

In this contribution, I examine how fiction sparks interest in antiquity at such an early age. Often overlooked by scholars, fiction plays indeed a crucial role in promoting knowledge about antiquity and inspiring new research. It forges an emotional connection with the past, particularly through narratives set in historical or mythological contexts.

To explore this phenomenon, I adopted a quantitative methodology by conducting an anonymous survey among 124 antiquity enthusiasts.

The survey revealed that 95% developed a passion for antiquity before the age of 20, with many citing novels, comics, films, and TV shows as their initial inspiration.

The love for antiquity leads to a lifelong passion, reflected in history-related hobbies, such as visiting museums or reading novels and watching movies set in the past. Most interestingly, even those not

professionally involved in the field often engage in historical research in their free time (62% of the respondents), prompted by their early exposure to fiction.

In conclusion, the results prove that fiction is a great ally of antiquity studies as it reaches a wider audience than academic research. This early passion turns people into lifelong antiquity fans, leading to positive impacts on both the spread of knowledge of antiquity and the research itself.

Gina White, University of Kansas

Cicero the Fanboy: can real person fanfiction help us to understand Cicero's dialogues?

In an attempt to define *fanfiction*, a recent volume points to the following five key characteristics: 1) it is non-commercial, 2) it “rewrites and transforms other stories”, 3) it uses material whose copyright is currently held by others, 4) it is produced within a particular, “fannish” community, and 5) it is “speculative fiction about character rather than about the world” (Coppa, 2017, p.1-16).

Strikingly, with the exception of requirement 3) – which is both anachronistic when applied to the pre-copyright world of ancient Rome, and fails to capture the modern genre of “real person fiction” that populates its pages with characters taken from the real world rather than those taken from the artwork of another creator – each of these characteristics also apply to Cicero's dialogues. These texts are written not for financial gain, but for circulation within a like-minded community of literary enthusiasts; they take characters familiar from Roman history and reimagine them within the context of a Platonic dialogue; and they focus on exploring how famous personalities might react in this new, imaginative context (Laelius, for example, when asked to explain friendship, or Cato when asked about old age). The *De Senectute* even begins, as real person fanfiction is wont to do, with a wry author's note acknowledging that the representation of Cato may be a little out of character.

Having acknowledged these similarities, this presentation will go on to explore the value that conceptualizing Cicero's work as a “fannish” endeavour might have for our understanding of these texts. In the first instance, considering the dynamics of production as being akin to writing within a modern “fannish community” helps to emphasise the communal and collaborative nature of these texts. Cicero's friend Atticus, for example, is often referred to by scholars as an “editor” or “publisher” (e.g. Tutrone, 2013, 162). The creative, non-commercial role he takes in the production and distribution of these texts, however, might be more helpfully understood as that of a “beta reader” *cum* zine distributor.

Secondly, it helps us to understand more easily the affective aspects of the production of these works. They are often described by the author as products of *otium* (“leisure”) – a description which seems so at odds with the obvious effort put into their composition that it has led modern scholars to talk of Cicero's “redefinition of *otium*” (Hanchey, 2013, 172). By considering the similarities with fanfiction, however, we can take more seriously Cicero's representation of his authorial project as a hobby that he conceived of very differently from his work as a statesman, and one which helped, in building a literary community, to relieve the burden of his political isolation at the end of his life.

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Anastasia Zabalueva, University of Toronto

Cultural Dynamics in "Cardamon": Critiquing Colonialism and Racism in Classical Archaeology

This paper explores how the fanfic “Cardamon” transforms the narrative of two characters from the "Attack on Titan" franchise into a powerful critique of cultural imperialism, coloniality, and racism within North American academia, particularly in the field of Classical archaeology. Set in an "alternative universe – modern setting," the fanfic retains only the names, personalities, and physiques of the canonical characters, allowing the author to weave in her own experiences in classical archaeology to craft distinct life stories.

In “Cardamon,” Levi Ackerman is reimagined as an Arab postgraduate researcher in archaeology at the University of Jordan, and Erwin Smith as a scholar from an Ivy League University visiting the Middle East for the first time to present on dating techniques of local pottery. This setup initially suggests a clichéd Orientalizing romance, but the narrative swiftly subverts such expectations.

Levi’s sharp and dismissive demeanor towards Erwin, who is depicted as inexperienced in fieldwork and culturally ignorant, shifts the power dynamics from the outset. However, while Erwin struggles with local customs, language barriers, and environmental challenges, he does not turn away Levi, who “has met an awful lot of ajnabis with a Lawrence complex, looking for their very own Dahoum,” as Erwin consistently demonstrates openness, honesty, and respect throughout their encounter.

As their interaction deepens, the story delves into the systemic issues in international research that marginalize local archaeologists and facilitate the appropriation of archaeological heritage. It brings to light the realities faced by PhD candidates and postgraduates, including financial struggles and the impact of passport privilege on their research opportunities. The narrative critiques the often patronizing attitude of Western scholars, who, under the guise of providing opportunities, perpetuate a "white savior" complex.

“Cardamon” thus serves as an unexpected commentary on the entrenched inequities in academic research and the ongoing effects of colonial and imperial legacies in classical archaeology. By foregrounding these issues through the lens of popular fiction, it invites readers to reconsider the power dynamics and cultural biases inherent in scholarly practices.

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This event was organized by **Julia Neugarten MA**, Department of Arts & Culture Studies, Radboud University, and **Dr. Amanda Potter**, Open University and University of Liverpool.

