

Institution: Newman University
Unit of Assessment: 30 – History
Title of case study: Pop Classics: the reception of the Ancient World through blogging
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Juliette Harrison's blog based on her research has had an impact on wider society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By enriching the lives and imaginations of readers both nationally and internationally, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the ancient world, ancient literature and of classical reception studies. • By informing and influencing the education of school children, especially secondary school students learning Latin. • By preserving and presenting cultural heritage.
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Harrison's research focuses on two key areas; myth and religion in the ancient (especially Roman) world, and the reception of the Classical world in modern popular culture. She explores both areas through the theoretical lens of cultural memory (as defined by Jan Assmann), and the related concept of cultural imagination, outlined in her 2013 monograph, <i>Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire</i>, which explores dream reports in Roman-period literature (Research Output 1).</p> <p>Harrison's current and forthcoming research draws together her two areas of interest, investigating the use of elements of ancient religion in modern popular representations of the ancient world, through outputs including a conference paper on 'Oracles in Vampire Fiction: Greek Oracles in <i>Angel: The Series</i> and <i>The Southern Vampire Mysteries</i>' and her forthcoming chapter 'Dreams and Monsters: Fantasy in the <i>Roman Mysteries</i>,' in <i>Classical Reception in Children's Literature</i>, edited by Lisa Maurice. Memory and the representation of past societies is central to all her work (for example her article 'Cultural Memory and Isis in the Greco-Roman world', Research Output 2, explores how ancient Egyptian culture was used and remembered in the Roman world, just as her work on Classical reception explores the ways in which Greco-Roman culture is remembered in the modern Western world). Although Harrison covers a wide range of popular media in her work on reception, she has a particular interest in children's and Young Adult literature, with publications on <i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i>, <i>The Hunger Games</i> and <i>The Roman Mysteries</i>.</p> <p>Harrison's blog, <i>Pop Classics</i>, is the pathway through which her research, especially her research on the reception of the ancient world in popular culture, has an impact on wider society. The blog comprises chiefly reviews of films, television series and novels set in or that make use of the ancient world (ranging from reviews of the novel and TV series <i>I, Claudius</i>, an historical story drawing on Tacitus and Suetonius, to discussion of brief references to the ancient world in films such as the recent Tom Cruise vehicle <i>Oblivion</i>, dir. Joseph Kosinski, 2013). The blog also incorporates occasional other pieces, such as a recent summary of the Classical zombie/ revenant tradition and some similar uses of revived corpses in modern fantasy literature.</p> <p>Some blog posts have been composed of initial thoughts leading to later research outputs (e.g. a 2009 post on the Oracles in <i>Angel</i> led to a conference paper presented in late June 2013). Other posts explain aspects of Harrison's research in a simple and informal way, such as reviews of <i>Buffy the Vampire Slayer</i>'s 'Restless' and <i>Star Trek: Voyager</i>'s 'Waking Moments,' episodes based around extended dream sequences, and a piece on the film <i>Stargate</i> (dir. Roland Emmerich, 1994) which reproduced a short oral paper given at a departmental seminar.</p>

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Harrison, J. G., 2014 (Forthcoming). 'Dreams and Monsters: Fantasy in the *Roman Mysteries*,' in *Classical Reception in Children's Literature*, L. Maurice (ed.), Leiden: Brill.

Harrison, J. G., 2014 (Forthcoming). 'Gladiatorial Imagery in Speculative Fiction: *Star Trek* and *The Hunger Games*,' in *Proceedings of the conference 'The Influence of Greek and Latin Antiquity in Contemporary Science-Fiction & Fantasy Works'*, held at the Université de Rouen and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, 7-9 June 2012.

Harrison, J. G., 2014 (Forthcoming). 'Antony and Atia: Creating a New Tragic Romance' in *Rome: Season Two*, M. Cyrino (ed.).

Harrison, J. G., 2013. *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire: Cultural Memory and Imagination*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Harrison, J. G., 2012. 'Cultural Memory and Isis in the Greco-Roman world' in *Memory and Urban Religion in the Ancient World*, M. Bommas, J. Harrison and P. Roy (eds.) (Volume Two of the series *Cultural Memory and History in Antiquity*), London and New York: Bloomsbury, pp213-236.

Harrison, J. G., 2012. 'Review' of P. James, *Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion on Screen: In Pursuit of the Perfect Woman*. London and New York: Continuum, 2011, in *The Classical Review*, Vol. 63 No. 01 pp277 279.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Pop Classics has enriched the lives and imaginations of a number of readers both nationally and internationally, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the ancient world, ancient literature and of classical reception studies. In addition to readers interested in Classics and Ancient History, the blog attracts many visitors whose primary interest lies in one of the areas of popular culture covered on the blog, particularly science fiction and fantasy, and children's literature. Harrison also writes for Den of Geek (www.denofgeek.com) and television review website *Doux Reviews* (<http://www.douxreviews.com>); her author page on that site (<http://www.douxreviews.com/p/about-us.html>) directs television fans to her own blog and when reviews of the series *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* have been requested, readers have been directed to Harrison's reviews of that show on *Pop Classics*.

The blog receives between 5457 and 17080 visitors per month, depending on the frequency of posting (statistics recovered 12/07/2013 from <http://www.sitemeter.com/?a=stats&s=s35popclassics&r=36>). The site has 216 subscribers through Feedly.com and 130 Google Followers. Most posts generate between 2 and 6 or more comments from readers and announcements of new blog posts on Twitter are often re-tweeted by several of Harrison's 789 followers. The *Pop Classics* Facebook page has 105 Likes. New posts are also shared on the page <http://roqueclassicism.com/>.

In addition to regular readers, particularly popular posts can reach a very wide audience. The review of the first episode of ITV's Roman-set sitcom *Plebs* received 726 views within the first three weeks, helped out by 289 viral shares on Facebook. A discussion of the relationship between the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* episode 'I Was Made to Love You' and the myth of Pygmalion was linked to from whedonesque.com, a major fan site for followers of Buffy creator Joss Whedon and his works. The link was posted by a fan who said, 'Still wondering if that particular episode is a retelling of Pygmalion? Well you might want to consider reading this blog post'. The post in question has received 6791 views to date (12/07/2013).

The blog enriches readers' imaginations by introducing them to films, books and television shows with some connection to the ancient world that they might not have heard of or would not otherwise have sought out, shown through comments such as 'will definitely check them out' (in reference to

Impact case study (REF3b)

The Roman Mysteries). The works in question are fictionalised representations of the ancient world but, having read the review, these readers will be aware of any historical inaccuracies or inconsistencies and will be able to learn about the ancient world through these popular representations without misinterpreting those places where the author or scriptwriter has taken some historical liberties.

Thanks to Harrison's work on children's literature, *Pop Classics* has had an impact on the education of children in schools. One blog post, 'Top 5 Representations of Pompeii' (<http://popclassicsjg.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/top-5-representations-of-pompeii.html>), was adapted and published in *The Journal of Classical Teaching*, at the request of editor Steven Hunt. Teachers have left comments on the blog or contacted Harrison through her Twitter account to express their intention to use some of the children's books reviewed, particularly Caroline Lawrence's historical detective series *The Roman Mysteries*, in their teaching. For example, one contact on Twitter, from Norton Knatchbull School, complimented the blog and said, 'Some good stuff here for my Year 7s.' Another commenter said,

'Juliette, that was great, I've been toying with the idea of introducing my Year 7 Latin class to some co-curricular reading and this sounds like the perfect way of doing it. I love reading re-tellings or interpretations of classical texts myself and want to share that with the younger sets at school. We're approaching the end of CLC 1 so this sounds as though it would tie in really nicely. Keep up the reviews! It's a great to have someone rounding up the good and the bad of Classics in popular so the rest of us can sit back and enjoy rather than endure.'

Pop Classics also preserves and presents cultural heritage, introducing readers to aspects of ancient history or pieces of Classical literature that they were not previously familiar with. For example, following a recent blog post on zombies, commenters left comments stressing how interested they were in the topic and expressing a desire to read Lucan's *Civil War* following the post, with one commenter saying:

'Interesting overview of classical necromancy! I wonder where the idea comes from, widespread as you mention, that the dead have knowledge of the future. I was familiar with the more famous version – descending to the underworld and all – but not with the idea of raising a zombie to prophesize [sic] for you.'

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Tweet from NKSClassics (Norton Knatchbull School) to ClassicalJG (Juliette Harrison) 09/04/2013: 'nice blog Juliette! [sic] Some good stuff here for my Year 7s ☺'
<https://twitter.com/NKSClassics/status/321623981797023744>
2. <http://popclassicsjg.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/the-roman-mysteries-secrets-of-vesuvius.html> (post on *The Roman Mysteries*, *The Secrets of Vesuvius*, with comment from a teacher)
3. <http://www.w.whedonesque.com/comments/25845> (link from whedonesque.com to post on 'I Was Made to Love You,' with comments)
4. Harrison, J. G., 2013. 'Five Great Representations of Pompeii in Popular Culture,' in *The Journal of Classical Teaching*, Vol. 27, pp55-57.
5. <http://popclassicsjg.blogspot.co.uk/2009/07/roman-mysteries-pirates-of-pompeii.html> (comment on *The Roman Mysteries* suggesting they are 'well worth tracking down')
6. <http://popclassicsjg.blogspot.co.uk/2011/02/roman-mysteries-man-from-pomegranate.html> (comment on *The Roman Mysteries* saying 'will definitely check them out')
7. <http://popclassicsjg.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/zombies-ancient-and-modern.html> (post on zombies, with comments)
8. <http://www.douxreviews.com/2010/04/suggestion-box.html?showComment=1363875994266#c3304403730503928924> (reply to two requests for *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* reviews at *Doux Reviews*, directing the reader to *Pop Classics*)
9. <http://lesplumesasthmaiques.net/fr/pop-classics-fires-of-pompeii/> (French translation of a blog post on *Doctor Who* for a French blog)
10. <http://torredelarte.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/piromides-por-juliette-harrison.html> (Spanish

translation of a blog post on the Discworld for a Spanish blog)