

PROCLAMATION !

ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL, AND RENAISSANCE STUDIES

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The Art of Don Juan

By: Britannia Wanstrath



In the Year of Our Lord two thousand and thirteen, we have these announcements to present.

Firstly, *Charades Night* will take place on April 5th. Professor Livingston will host dinner followed by the game.

Secondly, Professor Serena Connolly will speak about Cato's *Distichs* on April 16th at 4:15 in the Bayley Room.

Thirdly, the Metropolitan Opera at the Crossroads cinema will be showing *Julius Caesar* at noon on April 27th. Tickets are \$24. Contact Dr. DeMarco if interested.

Most Sincerely,

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The Art of Don Juan, PG 1-3

Setting the Record Straight, PG 4-6

In Defense of Manuscripts, PF 6-7

Announcements, 8

The story of Don Juan is a popular legend, and has become a well-known trope in pop culture as the cocky and womanizing seducer. While it is unclear just how far back the story goes, the first recorded instance of Don Juan comes from a play published in Spain in 1630. The play by Tirso de Molina is called *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest* (*El Burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de Piedra*) and is set in 14th century Spain and Italy. It is an integral part of Spanish history, and many works have been made based on the original story, including other plays, books, movies, and television shows.



My project involves making a comic adaptation of the Don Juan story that can be used in intermediate Spanish language and culture classes. The comic follows the original play, with slight edits to

modernize certain words. For the setting, I have decided to begin the play in the 14th century as the story intended, then progress the era with each act change so as to encompass Spanish history from the setting of the story to the century of Tirso de Molina.

To undertake this project, I have done extensive research into the architecture and fashion of these time periods to design my own outfits and settings for the characters. The designs of the characters were based on the ethnicities and beauty standards found in the different regions of Italy and Spain.



For example, comparing different manuscripts over the ages, one begins to observe a process of standardization whereby size and materials slowly become more predictable (something which pairs, obliquely, with the same way that a student, or any reader, might today. Furthermore, handling the actual materials generates an

appreciation for not only the great care that went into making the manuscripts themselves but also the nature of who were considered “readers”: the higher classes, the religious, the affluent, the well-connected (at least until the printing press came along and changed the face of who read and how they did it). By considering not just what a book contains but also its formal characteristics, in fact by especially paying attention to these elements, one can glean a great deal more insight into the webs of meaning a text condenses and localizes.

So learning about manuscripts, codices, and “old books” is rewarding because it demonstrates that part of analyzing and appreciating literature consists of evaluating the physical and non-textual dimensions of what we study. Texts and books aren’t only vehicles for ideas but also have the ability to signify in their own right about who, what, how, and why people read. Bridging past and present reading experiences while looking beyond the text to physical and social elements, these early manuscripts only give an English major like myself even more questions to consider. But, then again, that’s precisely the beauty of medieval illumination.

her daughter is more beautiful than Aphrodite? Never would have happened, even if Aphrodite herself decided not to punish the blasphemy as she did in every other instance in myth.

In short, Hades is never really himself in movies. He is an American fear of mortality combined with the Christian devil and given a Greek name. Hades really needs a better agent.

In Defense of Manuscripts

By: Matt Hill



Though I'm not a medievalist, I love to learn about early manuscript culture. But people often ask me: "What's the point of studying all those old books from the Middle Ages? They're not still relevant, are they? What do they show? What could you learn?" A great deal, actually.

For me, the biggest takeaway of learning about these texts is in getting to see and experience firsthand the genesis of a literate culture. By getting insight into the production techniques of these manuscripts, we can better appreciate and understand how the conventions that began with them still carry through to today.

The goal of my project is to create something that can be used to simultaneously teach Spanish language, culture, and history to intermediate Spanish students, while also being enjoyable to a native Spanish speaker. The comic format works well for such a teaching aid because in many Spanish books geared towards teaching, the book must include footnotes to explain difficult concepts or new words which distract the student from the reading and cause many to disengage from the story.

A comic can provide explanations for dialogue through the use of images. For many students, it is intimidating to start a novel in another language when they open the book and see a wall of text. A comic allows for the story to be broken into panels of manageable pieces with pictures that can support the dialogue but also provide a view into the aesthetics of the era.

While the student is reading the story, they can also see what a castle from the time period would look like, how the people would dress and compose themselves, and what life was like for the nobility compared to peasants. With the help of images, the reader is encouraged to engage in the full

meaning of the text, and see not just



Setting the Record Straight

By: Madeline Lank



As we approach Oscar and other film award season, I am reminded how much I hate Hollywood's tweaking of classic stories. Not re-imagined or films inspired by classic myth—Oh Brother where art thou? and The Hunger Games are perfectly alright. No, I'm talking about placing classic myths in classic settings and completely messing up the classic thought and ideas to suit audiences. In particular, it bugs me how often Hades, of all other the Greek gods, is the designated villain when he is arguably the least likely to interfere with mortal affairs. In particular, I'm talking about Clash of the Titans (2010), its sequel Wrath of the Titans (2012) and Disney's Hercules (1997).



Although it may be asking too much for historical accuracy from Disney, the fact that the lord of the underworld appears as the scheming, jealous brother desperate to overthrow Zeus in all three movies cannot be coincidence.

One part in which all films are agreed is that Hades is bitter about ruling the dead. Disney's Hades says Zeus gave him the job; Clash claims he was tricked. In reality, he was neither. In the Greek tradition, Poseidon, Zeus and Hades determined who ruled which domain by casting lots (Iliad 15. 187-92). This was a legitimate decision method in ancient Greek custom for dividing property.

Although he was the oldest, and thus should have inherited the most, Hades quite literally drew the short straw. Unlike his cinematic counterparts, there is no reference to Hades being discontent or adversarial towards Zeus. He aids Zeus' progeny in their quests, lending Cerberus to Heracles and his cap of invisibility to Perseus. Zeus also played a key role in giving Persephone to Hades without her mother's consent (Hymn to Demeter, 3-10). All in all, Hades makes no mention in myth of bearing his brother any ill will. Nor is Hades violent and destructive. Hades is the neutral god, taking no part in any conflict. He was one of the few Olympians not to interfere with the mortals in the Trojan War.



Perhaps it is because Hades was never really invoked, depicted, or named—though still worshipped—because of the great fear of death, but Hades seldom appears in the land of the living at all.

All punishment for wrongs against the gods is conducted in the Underworld. Even Sisyphus, the guy who imprisoned Hades and cheated death multiple times, is free from retribution while he lives (which is not very long). So that scene where Hades, acting as Zeus' strong man, super-ages Cassopeia in Clash for saying ...