

(Un)-Forgotten Realms: Science Fiction and Fantasy in and about the Ancient Mediterranean  
25<sup>th</sup> Annual Classics Graduate Student Colloquium  
University of Virginia  
Saturday, April 17th, 2021  
Keynote Speaker: Jennifer Rea (University of Florida)

Conceptions of the fantastic appear throughout Classical antiquity as the Greeks and Romans looked to the supernatural as a way of understanding themselves and the world around them. Ancient literature abounds with elements of fantasy, notably in tales of transformation and interference from the divine like Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Imagined worlds feature prominently in philosophical texts, such as the works of Plato, and comic texts such as the works of Aristophanes and Lucian, providing the authors a means by which to examine their own societies. The fantastic also nears science fiction as is exemplified by the scientific inventions and innovations of the Hellenistic period. Surviving material evidence, like curse tablets, has greatly informed our views of practical magic, and the everyday experience of the supernatural. Our own society revels in the fantasy of the classical world in multiple forms of media, spanning from novels to film and even the world of games. Traces of the ancient world can be seen in the works of authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien, George R.R. Martin, and Dan Simmons, as well as the Marvel Universe and DC Comics. Several recent publications examine issues of fantasy and science fiction through the lens of Classical reception, notably Rogers and Stephens 2015 and 2019, whose volumes collect articles exploring the classical connections in a variety of sources from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Frank Herbert's *Dune* and *Battlestar Galactica*.

For this conference, we seek papers exploring elements of science fiction and fantasy in the ancient world and about the ancient world. We welcome submissions from all students of the ancient Mediterranean world and its reception. Possible topics could include but are not limited to:

- Literary depictions of space travel and outer space
- Fantasy worlds or the reality of other worlds in ancient literature
- Magic, ritual, the supernatural, and interactions with the divine in ancient literature or art
- Depictions of transformation or monsters in ancient literature or art
- Material evidence such as curse tablets and magical papyri
- Automata and inventions in ancient literature and myth
- Dystopian and utopian visions of the future
- Reception of ancient literature in modern, early modern, and medieval literature and media (including games, television and film, and other visual art)

Papers should be 20 minutes in length. Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words (not counting bibliography) to Iam McClain ([hmj4uj@virginia.edu](mailto:hmj4uj@virginia.edu)) by February 5, 2021. This colloquium will be held online and will be accessible to all, including those with physical

disabilities, mental illness, and/or chronic illness. Any questions may be addressed to colloquium organizers Holly Maggiore ([hm3pq@virginia.edu](mailto:hm3pq@virginia.edu)) and Jovan Cvjetičanin ([jc3ev@virginia.edu](mailto:jc3ev@virginia.edu)).