

## Recovering History – 2:10pm-2:50pm GMT

### **Myth Reimagined**

**Abstract:** Though there have been several articles that discuss the impact of videogames in relation to pedagogical tools for the study of classics, there has not been a great deal done on how these videogames can also be used as a means for portraying, or in the case of games like Assassin’s Creed, reimagining LGBTQ roles in antiquity. Regardless of whether these portrayals are ‘authentic’ or not, their importance cannot be ignored. This is especially the case when the historical videogame maybe one’s only introduction to the past; thus, the videogame becoming the historical artifact. Though it can be argued that this could be damaging to the ‘authenticity’ of history, I will argue in this article that it can only add to the richness of the story, especially as the modern interpretation is equally valid in terms of historical storytelling and in the case of Assassin’s Creed Odyssey, imagining or reimagining the idealised vision of LGBTQ roles in antiquity.

Through a critical analysis of Assassin’s Creed Odyssey, I will examine the ‘lost’ voice of LGBT women in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and how that voice is ‘reimagined’ for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, contemporary and try to understand the reasons behind these changes, whilst demonstrating how videogames can be used as source material for understanding the past (or at least reimagining it). Though this article will focus primarily on the protagonist Cassandra and her relationships with NPCs, it will also examine the portrayal of myths from an LGBTQ perspective and the voice of Sappho that is prominent in Cassandra’s visit to Mytilene Lesbos. This will be done with the hope to demonstrate the significance of these portrayals for the 21<sup>st</sup> century contemporary.

**Bio:** Dani Shalet is a Research Fellow in the LASAR team and Canterbury Christ Church University and a Lead Tutor in primary and secondary education. Her speciality is in religion and popular culture with a special interest in religion and myth in film and video games. In her past life Dr Shalet was an MMO gaming podcaster and has always had a passion for Classics and Archaeology.

### **“Sweet tits of Billy!”: Reclaiming Queer History in *Exit Stage Left: The Snagglepuss Chronicles***

**Abstract:** This paper examines DC’s adaptation of Snagglepuss, a character that made his debut in 1959 and eventually became part of Hanna-Barbera’s *Yogi Bear Show*.<sup>1</sup> Mark Russell and Mike Feehan’s 6-issue series (2017-2018) builds an origin story for the eponymous animated character by emphasizing his initially coded queerness and transforming him into

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<sup>1</sup> Snagglepuss’s famous catchphrase, “Heavens to Murgatroyd!” becomes the still whimsical but more subversive “Sweet tits of Billy!” in the DC comics adaptation.

a famous gay playwright who is blacklisted during the McCarthy era. *The Snagglepuss Chronicles* builds a storyworld that borrows characters both from contemporary literary, popular, and political culture (from Dorothy Parker to Marilyn Monroe and Nikita Khrushchev), as well as from *The Yogi Bear Show* and related animated series, such as *The Huckleberry Hound Show*. In Russell and Feehan's adaptation, whose storyline develops between 1953 and 1959, humans and anthropomorphic animals live side by side during a dark time in American history, when alliances are fragile, conformity is brutally preserved, and difference is swiftly punished. In this context, Snagglepuss is not so much queered as recovered as a canonical queer character with added flamboyance, swagger, and a penchant for spending time at The Stonewall Inn. In a chilling atmosphere where self-preservation tests human/animal connection, salvation is finally to be found outside of the world of high art and in the "low" medium of animation, where the slightly elitist blacklisted Snagglepuss finds a home as a cartoon character.

In conversation with scholars such as Henry Jenkins, Pamela Demory, and Ramzi Fawaz, we are interested in answering questions such as: how does the recuperation of the original quirky and swishy Snagglepuss as a "sexy gay daddy" (as *The Advocate* described him) contribute to our understanding of McCarthyism, the Stonewall Riots, and present-day events from American history? Also, by suggesting that "low culture" forms like animation were able to provide valuable protection for "subversives," how does the comic contribute to current debates about the status of comics in the cultural hierarchy? Finally, what does the mixture of human and animal characters bring to the storyworld of Snagglepuss?

**Bios:** Mihaela Precup is Associate Professor in the American Studies Program at the University of Bucharest, where she teaches American visual and popular culture, contemporary American literature, and comics studies. She has co-edited (with Rebecca Scherr) three special issues of the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (on *War and Conflict* and *Sexual Violence*). She is the author of *The Graphic Lives of Fathers: Memory, Representation, and Fatherhood in Autobiographical Comics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Dragoş Manea is a lecturer at the University of Bucharest, where he teaches courses in American literature, cultural memory studies, and film studies. His main research interests include the adaptation of history, cultural memory, and the relationship between ethics and fiction. Relevant publications include "Western Nightmares: *Manifest Destiny* and the Representation of Genocide in Weird Fiction" (*Studies in Comics* 8:2, 2017) and "Infantilizing the Refugee: On the Mobilization of Empathy in Kate Evans's *Threads from the Refugee Crisis*" (with Mihaela Precup, *A/B Auto/Biography Studies* 35:2, 2020). He is a recipient of the Sabin Award for Comics Scholarship (2017).

## **Queer anarchism and punk commons: being-with *The Invisibles* and *V for Vendetta***

**Abstract:** This paper will analyse the rethinking of subjectivity and sociality in two texts, Alan Moore/ David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* (1982-9) and Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles* (1994-2000). Both texts portray a conflict between a dystopian state and 'secret' antagonists. Both texts also narrate the induction and education of a new, young associate or member into an alternate sociality based upon anarchist principles and an 'underground' cultural commons, occluded by the state. In Evey Hammond and Dane McGowan, the texts narrate the construction of a new subjectivity in which prior forms of individuality and being are abolished in favour of a revolutionary not-yet. The paper will work through two queered figures, V and Lord Fanny, to explore what Jack Halberstam calls 'a queer anarchism', 'a theory of anarchism that departs from the usual accounts of it as a political philosophy and that instead culls a theory of chaotic creativity from the unmoored, hyperkinetic, sonic traces left by a series of unconventional, hard-to-classify punk divas' ('Go Gaga'). The paper will read both *V* and Lord Fanny in this lineage, and use Jose E. Muñoz's concept of the 'punk commons' to explore not only the (counter-) cultural heritages that inform both *V* and the *Invisibles* but the importance of music to both texts. *V*'s Shadow Gallery and the sociality of the *Invisibles* cell (King Mob/ Lord Fanny/ Ragged Robin/ Boy) will be connected to what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney articulate as the 'undercommons', a space and practice of fugitivity. A 'queer commons', 'a nonexploitative utopian collectivity that is nevertheless grounded in punk's politics of the negative' (Millner-Larsen and Butt) is both the ground and the 'not-yet' of both texts.

**Bio:** Brian Baker is a Senior Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. He works critically on science fiction and masculinities. He has just completed an MA in Art Practice, and is developing his practice in relation to site, transmissions, sound, text and image, and time travel.