

INTRODUCTION

The articles included in this publication are products of the diverse research taking place at the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS). What unites this institute is a shared interest in the relationships between the arts and society, explored from a multitude of angles. LUCAS researchers study cultural production from Classical Antiquity to the present, and in doing so strive for a deeper understanding of the cognitive, historical, cultural, creative, and social aspects of human life. This collective interest inspires a wide variety of research topics, as well as the title of the present publication. A rhapsody is, after all, a set of distinct stories or musical pieces woven together to form a new whole, episodic yet integrated, its strength lying in its diversity.

Each of the articles in the present publication is the result of a PhD project at LUCAS, and, more specifically, is an endeavor of LUCAS PhD researchers to present facets of their research to both the wider academic community as well as non-academic audiences. In March 2016, at the initiative of the PhD Council, the Leiden Arts in Society Blog was founded. The blog, intended as a platform for PhD researchers affiliated with LUCAS, serves a fourfold aim: firstly, to showcase current research to the widest possible audience; secondly, to provide a platform that contributes to the training of accessible writing skills for graduate students, through meetings, workshops and a peer feedback system; thirdly, to provide authors the opportunity to organize their thoughts on their research, explore new directions, or make new connections; and lastly, to promote scholarly contact, discussion, and exchange within the PhD community. The latter aim has also led to collaborations between LUCAS PhDs, resulting in articles on topics ranging from paleontological treasures appropriated by Napoleon, to Early Modern cooking, to knowledge repositories in history and fantasy, to name a few.

Over the years we have communicated LUCAS-based research to a wide audience; many blog posts have reached several thousand readers, while others have led to radio interviews. Additionally, we have linked our research to current events via theme weeks and

months, such as a series of blog posts dedicated to the *Fish and Fiction* exhibition at Leiden University Libraries in September 2018, and, in response to the theme of the Dutch National Week of the Book, a series dedicated to different aspects of motherhood in March 2019. Therefore, we were pleased to produce this collection, allowing blog authors to expand their initial posts into full articles. The resulting papers provide more insight into the projects that inspired different blog posts, and present additional research carried out since the publication of the original blog post. The tone of the following articles adhere to the original blog style: they aim to be accessibly written and of interest to a diverse audience. The present volume reflects the multifaceted research undertaken by PhDs at LUCAS on the arts and society from Antiquity to today.

Focusing on collections and technical innovations, Jun P. Nakamura and Liselore Tissen explore practices of art collecting, presentation, and reproduction. Further exploring a topic discussed in [his blog post published earlier this year](#), Nakamura interprets the late seventeenth-century collecting of dollhouses by wealthy Dutch women as an extravagant practice which shared traits with other contemporary collecting practices such as the *Wunderkammer* and curiosity cabinet. Expanding on her blog posts “[Masterpieces Remastered: Rembrandt in the Age of Technical Reconstruction](#)” (2018) and “[Authentic Copies](#)” (2019), and focusing on the 3D print of Rembrandt’s *Saul and David* (1651-1655 and 1655-1658), Tissen explores whether a 3D-printed reproduction can be considered an authentic copy of an original work of art.

Analyzing texts and the process of reading, Andrea Reyes Elizondo, Céline Zaepffel, and Amaranth Feuth explore continuing influences, receptions, and innovations of and through literary works. Highlighting two of the topics discussed in her [blog series which appeared between 2016 and 2018](#), Reyes Elizondo critically reflects on the meaning of the verb ‘to read’ as also encompassing image interpretation or listening to someone reading aloud. Focusing on children’s literature and expanding on her [blog post published in 2018](#), Zaepffel discusses the history of Jean de La Fontaine’s *Fables*. She shows that it has often been considered a delightful and instructive book for children, taught in French schools for this and other traditional reasons which she discusses and problematizes. Feuth’s article is based on

her [blog post published in 2017](#), and explores the numerous intertexts of the Western literary tradition in the creation of a new Caribbean epic in Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990). In a comparison which inspired the title of the present publication, she notes that in Antiquity one who recited poetry was called a rhapsodist, meaning 'a man sewing a song', that is, composing something new based on existing elements.

Marion Bracq, Nynke Feenstra, and Looi van Kessel explore topics related to pop culture. Bracq's article, based on her [blog post published in 2017](#), examines how the Italian epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1516-1532) by Ludovico Ariosto has inspired comic books, focusing on two examples: *Paperino furioso* (1966) by Luciano Bottaro and the Dylan Dog issue *Il re delle mosche* (2009) written by Giovanni di Gregorio and drawn by Luigi Piccatto. Finally, Feenstra and van Kessel explore different aspects of LGBTQ+ and Deaf identifications, based on [four blog posts published in 2016](#). Their article reflects on the importance of intersectionality as a challenge to the boundaries of the Deaf community, the LGBTQ+ community, and in communication with an audience outside these communities.

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