

Participant Information Sheet

Royal Holloway, University of London

Study Title: Positive representations of racialised and transgender identity in *Les Misérables*, its adaptations and in fan works.

Details of the study:

My research will analyse positive representations of racial and transgender identity in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, its adaptations, and in fan works. The adaptations I will be focusing on are the 2018 Japanese film *Owarinaki Tabiji*, the 2019 French film *Les Misérables*, and PBS/BBC's co-produced 2018/9 miniseries. The fan works that I will be analysing are fan art and fan fiction.

The aim of this study is to use the transgender concept of *identity euphoria* to counter the traditional theory that non-white racial and non-cisgender identity must centre self-hatred, disgust and shame as foundations, as seen in the common interpretation of Javert as a self-hating Romani man. Before considering *euphoria*, I will consider how racism (most commonly anti-Blackness, antiziganism, orientalism) and transphobia have been vocalised from Hugo's novel through adaptations and into fan works.

Given that Hugo was deeply inspired by both Homeric epic and Biblical verse, (which in turn are works rooted in, amongst others, the Mesopotamian, Canaan, Semitic, Phoenician, Egyptian and Ethiopian cultures,) I will ask how we can adjust our critical language if we do not give the white, French, Victor Hugo the hierarchy of 'originality' but adapt to a language of requisition or re-appropriation, especially empowering transgender fans of colour.

I will then offer a new reading of Victor Hugo's text that frames non-white racial and queer gender identities as positives; traits that inspire joy, confidence and euphoria. In doing so I ask us to shift our Eurocentric understanding of 'untouchable' classical literature greats like Victor Hugo and to continue to decolonise our understanding of the presentation of race and gender in both literature and in the contemporary world.

What will your participation involve?

For my analysis of screen and stage adaptations, I will interview cast and crew where available, in which I will ask about their experiences working on the production, about racial and transgender identity within the adaptation, and personal/production reasonings behind these choices.

For my analysis of fan works and fan art, I will be using the social media sites Tumblr and Twitter, as well as the hosting site Archive of our Own. I will discuss fans' creative works, noting how race and gender have been depicted. Of particular interest will be how Javert is racialised in fandom, how the Barricade Boys act as conduits for transgender identities, and the conceptualisation of race and gender in modern!AUs in comparison to canon-era works. Within the fandom strand I will be conducting interviews with people who consider themselves racialised as non-white (i.e. a person of colour / mixed-race / BAMER / a person from the global majority) and/or within the transgender umbrella. In these interviews I will ask participants about their experiences in the fandom as a racialised/transgender

person, about headcanons and reasonings, and about their views on race and gender in Hugo's text and in adaptations.

For both strands of research I will use interviews conducted via email as well as by audio recording with the intent for release in podcast form. The interviews may be conducted in English or in Japanese.

Benefits and disadvantages of your participation

There are no disadvantages expected as a result of participating in this study over and above the usual risks of participating in conversations about identity, race and gender.

A likely risk of participating relates to your discussing personal experiences in a context of racial, transphobic or workplace discrimination. You are not required to disclose or discuss any information you feel is too sensitive, only what you wish to share.

While all care will be extended through the interviews, talking about racial and gender identity and workplace discrimination may lead to distress. You are welcome to take a break at any point, or if you prefer, you can decide to end your participation and withdraw from the study. If you experience distress from the interview, we recommend contacting Switchboard (<https://www.switchboard.org.uk>), Samaritans (<https://www.samaritans.org>), or the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (<https://www.baatn.org.uk/free-services/>). These details will also be available in a debrief form sent after your interview.

What will happen if you decide to take part?

All participation in interviews is entirely voluntary. There will be the option to choose not to answer individual questions in the interview, and you are free to selectively answer the questions.

The audio interviews will be conducted online through the website *Zencast* (which requires the making of a free account) or via Zoom (which does not). These interviews may be edited for release via the podcast *Bread and Barricades: A Les Mis Podcast*. These episodes are free, and are intended for educational use.

Your participation in any or all of the above will require you to confirm you have read and understood this information sheet and sign a consent form. If you are under the age of 18, your parent or guardian will also need to read this information sheet and sign a consent form to allow you to participate in this research. All identifying data regarding anyone under 18 years of age will be anonymised. If you are under 16 years of age, you will be excluded from the study as I am not collecting data for children under this age. Consent given is only for the purposes outlined in this information sheet and accompanying consent form.

How will we use your data?

I will ask all participants to provide a name (this can be a preferred name, a username/pseudonym, or anonymised) and some demographic details (race, gender), but these will not be used to reveal/speculate about your identity, and you will be given the option not to answer these questions. If you have given your consent, I may link this data with your responses where pertinent. For example:

Name (gender, race) replied that [pronoun] [writes/draws/headcanons] [character] as [race/gender]. Name reported that in their time in the community, especially on [website], they had experienced harassment based on their identity as a [race/gender] person.

Or:

Name (gender, race) replied that [pronoun] worked on the [production]. Name told me that the reasoning behind the decision to cast [actor] was [reason], and they speculated that [opinion].

If you have asked for your data to be anonymised, your signed consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide and your personal data will be destroyed. In this case your name, race, gender and any other identifying information you have provided will not be linked to your answers. For example:

Respondent 1 replied that they [write/draw/headcanon] [character] as [race/gender].

Respondent 1 reported that in their time in the community, they had experienced harassment based on their race and gender.

Respondent 2 replied that they had worked on a production that was a screen adaptation of *Les Misérables*. They raised that they believed the nature of the casting was because of [racial/gender] reasons.

All subject data will be stored electronically and will be password protected. Once the thesis has been submitted, data will be kept for a period of time in-line with the institutional and publisher requirements in case of publication. Otherwise, after three years, all personal data will be destroyed.

What are the safeguarding measures?

If you have concerns about how your personal data will be used after you have participated in the research, you should raise any concerns with the research team in the first instance. If you are dissatisfied with the response, you may contact the Information Compliance team at DataProtection@rhul.ac.uk.

What happens if issues arise during the course of the project?

You are free to withdraw from the study without explanation or penalty at any time.

You will have the right to withdraw your own data from the project up until the point when it is no longer practical to do so. This point is April 2023, when I will have written up my findings in preparation of submitting the thesis. Withdrawing before this point will mean all your data is removed from the study and destroyed. If you wish to withdraw after April 2023, I will destroy identifiable data stored securely and anonymise your responses, but I will not be able to remove the data used in my thesis.

If participating in an audio interview, you will be provided with the edited audio and may request edits, or withdraw your participation, for up to 10 working days before the scheduled release date of the episode. After the audio has been published, you may request to have the audio unlisted at any point. The audio will be taken down from all public areas, but will remain available to be listened to by those reading the thesis.

Ethical Approval

Approval for this study has been granted by the Royal Holloway Research Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality

The researcher, the researcher's two supervisors, markers and external examiners will have access to the data. There is the possibility that the results could be written up for publication (e.g., in an academic journal). In this situation, only relevant researchers will have access to anonymous data, and the anonymous data might be uploaded to an online repository. In all instances, anonymity of individual participants will be assured.

Data protection

I will abide by the current data protection act and the *research participant privacy notice*.

GDPR statement

Important General Data Protection Information (GDPR): Royal Holloway, University of London is the sponsor for this study and is based in the UK. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. Any data you provide during the completion of the study will be stored securely on hosted on servers within the European Economic Area.

Royal Holloway is designated as a public authority and in accordance with the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Act 1985 and the Statutes which govern the College, we conduct research for the public benefit and in the public interest. Royal Holloway has put in place appropriate technical and organisational security measures to prevent your personal data from being accidentally lost, used or accessed in any unauthorised way or altered or disclosed. Royal Holloway has also put in place procedures to deal with any suspected personal data security breach and will notify you and any applicable regulator of a suspected breach where legally required to do so.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible (i.e., the email address you provide us). The lead researcher will keep your contact details confidential and will use this information only as required (i.e., to provide a summary of the study results if requested). The lead researcher will keep information about you and data gathered from the study, the duration of which will depend on the study.

Certain individuals from RHUL may look at your research records to check the accuracy of the research study. If the study is published in a relevant peer-reviewed journal, the anonymised data may be made available to third parties. The people who analyse the information will not be able to identify you.

You can find out more about your rights under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 by visiting <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/about-us/more/governance-and-strategy/data-protection/> and if you wish to exercise your rights, please contact dataprotection@royalholloway.ac.uk.

Contact details

If you would like any further information you can contact me (Nemo Martin, they/them) through my university email address: nemo.martin.2013@rhul.ac.uk.

If you have any concerns about the way in which this study has been conducted, you should contact my primary supervisor (Professor Hannah Thompson, she/her) in the first instance:
Hannah.thompson@rhul.ac.uk.

NB: You may retain this information sheet for reference and contact us with any queries.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.