

According to conventional Western wisdom, the modern novel was invented in 18th-century England with works like Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. The Graeco-Roman novel had once been considered to be the origin of this branch of world literature, but this view had to contend with the dawning realization that romance and novel-like literature had already been produced in the "Orient" for centuries, especially in the land of the Nile, which has even been claimed as the Graeco-Roman novel's essential inspiration.

Egypt's role in the birth of romance and as a crucible for the branch of world literature which became the novel still lacks a concentrated effort of collaborative study scholars from Egyptology, Classics, Biblical and early Christian studies, even Coptology, given the under-appreciated legacy of the ancient novel in Coptic literature. This conference brings together just such a group in order to achieve a clearer understanding of the complex ways in which different cultural, ethnic, and religious groups coexisting in Egypt from ca. the 4th century BCE to the 7th century CE produced novelistic prose literature and romance, while the land of the Nile passed from Persian to Greek, from Greek to (East) Roman, from Roman to Persian and back to Roman, and finally to Islamic rule.



Graphics & layout: Birgit Nennstiel, BAK

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ROMANCE ON THE NILE THE ANCIENT NOVEL IN EGYPT – EGYPT IN THE ANCIENT NOVEL

September 10–12, 2025

Freie Universität Berlin
"Holzlaube" rooms 2.2058 & 0.2051
Fabeckstr. 23–25, 14195 Berlin

Organizers:

Joseph Cross • joseph.cross@hu-berlin.de
Theologische Fakultät, Berlin Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

Frederic Krueger • frederic.krueger@fu-berlin.de
Institut für Ägyptologie, Freie Universität Berlin

Program and further information:
www.berliner-antike-kolleg.org/link/novel



ROMANCE ON THE NILE



The Ancient
Novel in Egypt
– Egypt in the
Ancient Novel

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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 10–12, 2025**

WEDNESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER

Room 2.2058

13:30 **Registration**

14:00 **Welcome**

Greek and Demotic novel(la)s

14:15 **Friedhelm Hoffmann (Munich)**
“Diachrone Betrachtungen zur Länge
ägyptischer Erzählungen”

14:45 **Joseph Cross (Berlin)**
“The Demotic Novella in the Garden
of Egypt”

15:15 ☕ Coffee break

15:35 **Yvona Trnka-Amrhein (Boulder, CO)**
“Did the Ptolemies Invent the Ruler Novel?”

16:05 **Jacqueline Jay (Richmond, KY)**
“Orality and Literacy; Poetry and Prose:
Formal Antecedents of the Greek Novel”

16:35 **Nikoletta Kanavou (Athens)**
“Greek and Egyptian Fiction: Common
Narrative Themes and Techniques”

17:05 ☕ Coffee break

17:30 **Key Note**
Ian Rutherford (Reading)
“Egyptian and Greek Narratives:
Towards a Typology of Entanglement”

For registered guests only

18:30 **Reception with buffet**

THURSDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER

Room 0.2051

10:00 **Frank Feder (Berlin)**
“The Greek Version of the Myth of the Sun’s Eye
– Translation or Interpretation?”

10:30 **Franziska Naether (Leipzig)**
“Spellbinding Stories: Magic, Divination and
other Cult Practices in Literary Texts from
Graeco-Roman Egypt”

11:00 ☕ Coffee break

11:15 **Robert Cioffi (New York)**
“Representation and Resistance”

11:45 **Daniel Selden (Santa Cruz, CA)**
“Distributed Authorship in Historical
Perspective”

12:15 🍽️ Lunch

13:15 **Florian Ebeling (Heidelberg)**
“Heliiodorus’ Aithiopika and Egypt as
a Culture of Symbolic Meaning”

Jewish novel(la)s in Egypt

13:45 **Elisa Uusimäki (Aarhus)**
“Rethinking Artapanus: A Cosmopolitan Text?”

14:15 **Davide D’Amico (Metz)**
“How to Shape a King: Egyptian and Hellenistic
Literary Motifs in the Moses of Artapanus”

14:45 ☕ Coffee break

15:00 **Ted Erho (Munich)**
“Escaping Death: The Tale of the Egyptian
Brothers Jannes and Jambres”

Coptic literature and Cambyases traditions

15:30 **Frederic Krueger (Berlin)**
“The Legacy of the Ancient Novel
in Coptic Literature”

FRIDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER

Room 2.2058

10:00 **John Dillery (Charlottesville, VA)**
“Ancient Egyptian *Chaosbeschreibung* in the
Cambyases Romance”

10:30 **Michal Habaj (Brno)**
“Cambyases’ Negative Reputation and Darius.
An Example of Royal Judges in Herodotus’ Histories
(Hdt. 5.25 and 7.194)”

11:00 **Florian Graz (Oslo)**
“Echoes from the Past: The Origins of
Pseudo-Documentarism in Antiquity”

11:30–12:00
Final Discussion and Outlook



Registration & Contact

Joseph Cross
joseph.cross@hu-berlin.de

Frederic Krueger
frederic.krueger@fu-berlin.de