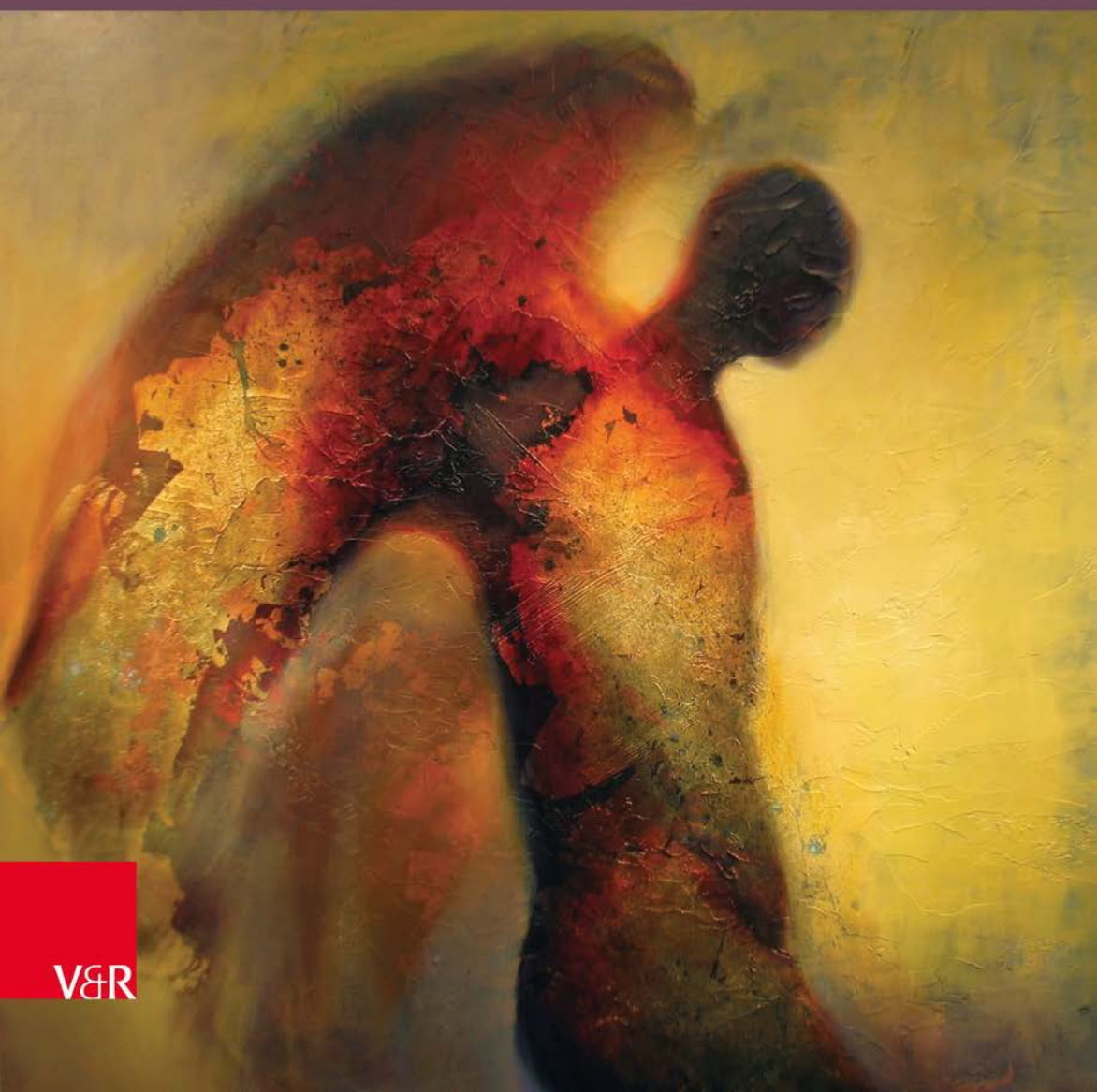
Gillian R. Overing / Ulrike Wiethaus (eds.)

American/Medieval

Nature and Mind in Cultural Transfer



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Gillian R. Overing and Ulrike Wiethaus

Introduction: The Making of American/Medieval

Medievalism and the American/Medieval

Any formal consideration of the modern understanding of the medieval past is already informed and shaped by the now well established scholarly field of Medievalism. There are varieties of "medievalism" to choose from, and these are energized by a widespread interest in all things medieval across different disciplines and contemporary media. We do not propose to offer a comprehensive survey of the field here, nor to engage in any of the lively debates about the relationship between Medieval Studies and Medievalism, or its status within and without the more traditional field of Medieval Studies.[1] We include some of the studies that have been influential in our own thinking in our bibliography, and many of our contributors take up aspects of these debates. The contributors to this collection rely on a variety of scholarship that considers and reveals connections between the medieval and modern, as well as having authored some of it themselves.[2] While we acknowledge our debt to the field of Medievalism, we also believe that our focus on the American/Medieval, like the neo-gothic train stations discussed by Joshua Davies, can provide a new point of critical departure, and some different points of entry into the medieval world as it extends through space and time.

1 See David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical Histo*ry (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2015).

2 See for example, Joshua Davies, "Re-locating Anglo-Saxon England: Places of the Past in Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts* and Geoffrey Hill's Mercian Hymns," *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture,* ed. Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, King's College London, 2012), 199–212 and "The Absent Anglo-Saxon Past in Ted Hughes's *Elmet*," *Anglo-Saxon Cuture and the Modern Imagination,* ed. David Clark and Nicholas Perkins (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), 237–53; Clare A. Lees, "Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts,* Lindisfarne and Anglo-Saxon Interlace" in *Anglo-Saxon Culture and the Modern Imagination,* ed. David Clark and Nicholas Perkins (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), 111–27; Ulrike Wiethaus, *German Mysticism and the Politics of Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

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Medievalism scholarship is often styled as conversations *about* the medieval and modern constructions of what the medieval is. Bruce Holsinger's work, for example, looks at the frequent demonization of the medieval and its imbrication in contemporary anti-Islamic political discourse.[3] Many of the plentiful discussions of medieval film are concerned to discover and illuminate the preoccupations of modernity, including race, ethnicity, and gender.[4] Other studies such as *Why the Middle Ages Matter: Medieval Light on Modern Injustice* ask profoundly ethical questions of the medieval, and interrogate it as a productive resource and guide for the modern.[5] One recent overview, David Matthews' *Medievalism A Critical History,* offers a thorough examination of the history of the field and its interdisciplinary reach, as well as a critique.[6] Matthews argues for a more integrated framework for the field of Medievalism overall, in that he attenuates the boundaries between concepts of medieval and modern, and between fact and fiction. Arthurian studies might offer a new paradigm for "a conjoined medieval-medievalism studies" which exist in a continuum. "There is, evidently," he asserts, "no authentic Arthur story, but rather multiple disseminating and proliferating texts, medieval, early modern, modern, and postmodern, none of them able to claim primacy."[7] Matthews' is an essentially connective argument, allowing for flow and intersection, rather than separation and definition, which chimes well with our aims in this volume. After all, scholars make such distinctions, and may also undo them. The focus of Matthews' work, however, in contrast to this and other volumes, reflects a largely Eurocentric pattern of scholarship.

Other scholars have paid specific attention to more global or intercontinental aspects of medievalism, beginning perhaps with Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's landmark study on post-colonialism, published at the beginning of the new millennium, and followed by, for example, Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul's collection of essays *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' Outside Europe.*[8] More recent examples are *International Medie-*

3 Bruce Holsinger, *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism and the War on Terror* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2007).

4 See for example, Anke Bernau and Bettina Bildhauer, eds, *Medieval Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Bettina Bildhauer, *Filming the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion, 2011), and Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, *Cinematic Illuminations: The Middle Ages on Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

5 Celia Chazelle, et al., ed., *Why the Middle Ages Matter: Medieval Light on Modern Injustice* (London: Routledge, 2012).

6 See fn 1.

7 Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical Histo*ry, 179.

8 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *The Postcolonial Middle Ages,* (New York: Palgrave 2001); Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, eds., *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' Outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2009).

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valism and Popular Culture by Louise D'Arcens and Andrew Lynch, and *Birdman of Assisi. Art and the Apocalyptic in the Colonial Andes* by Jaime Lara, the first in a new series on Medieval and Renaissance Latin America launched by the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.[9] The journal *postmedieval* offers some US focus in a volume entitled "Contemporary Poetics and the Medieval Muse."[10]

While we do not claim that the US has been left out of the conversation – American artists, media, and cultural productions of all kinds have been subjects of study – we wish to begin a new dialogue where the "American" is in deeper conversational exchange with the "Medieval." As argued elegantly by Jacques Le Goff, the European-centered conversation began as a slow trickle in 1492, with much opportunity for mythmaking and fantasy as the tempo accelerated over time.[11] As we will outline below, our volume is guided by tides of transatlantic cultural transfer in all its peculiar aliveness, paying attention to motion, movement, spaces, passages, and flows that preserve family resemblances yet allow for variation and adaptation specific to the predominantly Euro-American slice of the American pie. While our anthology is concerned with modernity's medieval shadow, our approach departs from the well-marked path in significant aspects. We are seeking to expand the parameters and foundations of how we think and speak through the medieval, of how we experience and enact its manifold mutations in the US, and how we can propose and develop new conversations with the past. Consistently, instead of a conversation about the medieval, each essay proposes a dialogue with and through the medieval through certain categories of performativity and simultaneity.

American/Medieval: The Challenge of Definition

When this project was in its early stages and the editors were applying for grant money to sustain its momentum, we were asked on a number of occasions what we meant by "medieval" – though, interestingly, we were never asked to define what we meant by "American." We filled the gap with a quantifiable generalization, "the time period between ca. 500 and 1500 CE." As we now face the challenge of definition once again, of either term, single and conjoined, we understand the terms as their meaning unfolded in the evolution and process of

9 Louise D'Arcens and Andrew Lynch, *International Medievalism and Popular Culture* (New York: Cambria, 2014); Jaime Lara, *Birdman of Assisi. Art and the Apocalyptic in the Colonial Andes* (Arizona: MRTS, 2016).

10 *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies,* 6, no. 3 (Summer 2015).

11 Jacques Le Goff, *Must We Divide History into Periods?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

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a three-year collaborative research endeavor. We began with the format of a 2013–2014 Wake Forest University Humanities Institute faculty research seminar directed by the editors, in which some of our present contributors participated. We continued and expanded the work of the research seminar by organizing a roundtable discussion on the American/Medieval at the Leeds International Medieval Congress in 2014, which opened up our transatlantic inquiry to other scholars, some of whom became contributors to the volume as well. The research was in some measure driven and created by our own personal identities as expatriate Europeans and our professional identities as medievalists. It was further energized by our pedagogical preoccupations with contemplative studies and mindfulness, such as a First Year Seminar on Contemplative Traditions.

While the American/Medieval shapes public architecture, recreational sites, and internet role-playing games (RPGs), among other manifestations, it also shapes the ethnic core stories Euro-Americans tell about who they are and who they wish to be. Secondly, there is the matter of the discipline of Medieval Studies. Our contributors found many ways to ask what mediates the relationship between Medieval Studies and a focus on contemporary Euro-American cultural formations of the medieval. The original questions included: how do medievalists, artists, writers, and entertainment industries communicate, replicate, and evoke these formations; how do national and transnational discursive fields relate to understandings of the medieval in its many unstable states; where are the communal memory sites and what functions do they serve for those who are associated with them; where are the medieval disjunctions and conjunctions of race, ethnicity and time in a settler society; and what do place, nature, and land/landscape ("built," "imagined," "creaturely," "wild") have to do with it? The questions proliferated over time, enriched and complicated by the density of our two conjoined concepts expressed as floating adjectives with the capacity to sometimes act and stabilize as nouns. American. Medieval.

American/Medieval is thus about the eddying currents that flow between two unstable markers, the American and the Medieval. The questions of definition raised by each of these very alive and very dynamic categories are addressed and refined by our contributors' work, but here we wish to emphasize the idea of flow and why we came to choose the glyph-(/)–or the slash. We claim our keywords as both adjectives and nouns, and the glyph offers us some agrammatical finesse. A/M, as one of several manifestations of settler identities with problematic and irreconcilable loyalties to "Old Europe" and the "New World," brings together changing stories of an unstable world-making.

A/M is not about extending some or another conceit of reifiable influence from Europe to the Americas. Rather, the glyph opens new paths to the life-worlds we share in, shape, and study right here, right now; the life-worlds we

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write about, and the life-worlds we open through our work to others. This project casts a wide net, and as its title suggests, and the glyph – or slash – insists, it allows multiple and open-ended means of connection and association. Our project insists that A/M is experiential and as such, always productive and efficacious as demonstrated by the case studies collated in this volume. To use Eugene Gendlin's felicitous concept, it offers a "felt sense" of the past in the present, and the present in the past, often barely so at the threshold of the spoken word.[12]

As we work through the growing body of literature in Medievalism Studies, and review the various accounts we have given of our own project, we see that we felt the need to re-define it at every turn of the process. A/M has been and will remain an emergent project precisely because the A/M complex is alive, breathing, usable, marketable, relevant, and has tremendous power to signify exuberance, fear, and grief, to evoke a sense of belonging and of being-in-the-world as Euro- Americans – for better or worse. For now, we will define A/M by following these transatlantic tides in three interlocking terms grounding the work of our contributors: A/M marks the persistence of old trauma (racism, class antagonism, settler colonialism), the exuberance of new archives (techno-communities, festivals, architecture), and the mobility of creatureliness (swans, herons, foxes and furries). And with all three movements, like water in the Atlantic, ebbing, flowing, and eddying, the chapters selected for this volume articulate a felt sense of the American, of the Medieval, and of A/M.

A/M: Old Trauma, New Archives, and Creatures on the Move

In the arts, architecture, online communities, and entertainment, we can observe a transfer of the European Medieval as a practice of conflicted heritage identification; we see how processes of displacement, traumatization, fragmentation, and ideological idealization work their way into the settler nation's symbolic and imaginary systems. Part One of the volume, entitled Old Trauma, brings together three essays: Tina Boyer's study of the haunting figure of Slender Man entitled "Medieval Imaginations and Internet Role Playing Games," Sol Miguel-Prendes' analysis of deeply contentious transatlantic scholarship in "Medieval Iberian Studies: Borders, Bridges, Fences," and Ulrike Wiethaus' essay on the transfer of anti-semitic stereotypes to the United States, "'Yet another group of cowboys riding around the same old rock': Religion and the German-American Genesis of a Capitalist Stereotype."

Boyer's article is based on the recent US social media phenomenon called

12 Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (New York: Bantam, 1982).

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Slender Man, a monstrous internet meme that has taken on a life of its own. Although at first this monster did not have a historical/mythological background, contributors on various social internet platforms such as blogs, YouTube, and Facebook soon established a German late medieval construct of its origins. This "medieval" background placed the monster into a Western European folkloric context. However, the "telling" of the monster story took a traumatic turn towards simultaneity when children started mimicking the actions of the monster in real life by attempting to murder a friend. With that in mind, Boyer's article explores the boundaries between storytelling, fear, monstrous entities, and the formation of identities that goes along with it. Questions that arise from such an investigation are: how does medievalism play into such an identity development for children and adults? Furthermore, how does this monster and its narrative complex define American medievalism? Child abduction by aliens is a predominantly American preoccupation, as is the fear of letting children play outside without supervision. Interestingly, Abenaki storyteller Joseph Bruchac has transferred the ancient Abenaki telling of Skeleton Man into the modern era.[13] The spirit being Skeleton Man behaves in an uncannily similar manner to Slender Man, although knowledge about him derives from a much older lineage of indigenous oral transmission. In the Abenaki context, the story's plot line empowers children to fight and overcome the monster rather than being overcome, abducted, and worse. The Abenaki youth succeed precisely because they are comfortable in the forest and wilderness. It is their home since time immemorial. We are tempted to speculate that in the story of Slender Man, settler trauma is reasserting itself in the fear of the forest and wilderness, its threatening foreignness and frontier character encoded as Slender Man's habitat.

Sol Miguel-Prendes maps the arc from alterity to identity in Iberian Studies and Hispanomedievalism in her essay "Medieval Iberian Studies: Borders, Bridges, Fences." Working with Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, Spain and the Americas relate by continuously building and dismantling borders, bridges, and fences around the trauma of Spanish colonization and the politics of memory surrounding al-Andalus. Medieval Iberian Studies and Hispanomedievalism undermine normative Anglo-Saxon narratives and memes of a northern European Middle Ages. Miguel-Prendes situates Hispanomedievalism's dual origins in a history of marginalization of Hispanism in US secondary education, and in Spain as a patriotic response to the Spanish-American War. She also considers some fascinating ramifications of its US and continental trajectory. Since the trauma of 9/11, for example, the topos of medieval *convivencia* in al-Andalus has garnered ever widening attention. Outside

13 Joseph Bruchac, *Skeleton Man* (New York: HarperTrophy, 2001).

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of the academy, the Camino de Santiago has become an international destination for those in search of contemplative experiences and "authentic" medieval spirituality. The trauma of Jewish marginalization and persecution is revisited in twenty-first century Spanish tourism as a fictitious re-creation of "medieval" Jewish quarters or evoked in Catalan nationalism. It also surfaces in the widespread unease with the growth of modern capitalism in the US and Germany, utilizing transatlantic cultural and economic exchange as its medium of transmission.

In her essay, "'Yet another group of cowboys riding around the same old rock': Religion and the German-American Genesis of a Capitalist Stereotype," Ulrike Wiethaus traces the biography of a monster not quite unlike Slender Man, the homo capitalisticus or Wirtschaftsmensch, an unfeeling, greedy, and overly rational type of human being embodying anti-judaic stereotypes first encountered in medieval Europe. In exploring Max Weber's interdisciplinary turn to look to religion as the foundation for economic behavior, economic thinkers and a wider public generated an explanatory model for the cultural shifts that once again pitted Christianity against Judaism as its inferior and destructive Other. The A/M anti-Judaic and eventually anti-Semitic complex has manifested transatlantically in the spread of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion by, among others, US business tycoon Henry Ford, and the uneasy evocation of the medieval vice of greed in Hollywood films about Wall Street. The peculiar narrative linkage between the civilized Anglo-Saxon settlers and the savage and primitive Other, collapsed in the negative figure of the Eastern and Southern European urban immigrant and the positive figure of the noble American Indian roaming the wilderness, complicates the story of American settler capitalism by unmasking its dependency on racism and genocide.

New Archives

The depth and historicity of the trauma embedded in our first three essays both haunt and give substance to the domain of the American/Medieval. This is to say old trauma does not disappear in the guise of creating new archives, or positing new ways of understanding the currents that flow between our two unstable markers, the American and the Medieval. The essays in this section look both forward and back, and create and interrogate the American/Medieval present. What, indeed, might comprise a "new archive?" How shall it be built, who will build it? (And if we build it, who will come?) What purpose will it serve?

The three essays in this section take up these questions from very different perspectives, and in varying registers. Joshua Davies' title "'Beyond the profane': Machine Gothic and the Cultural Memory of the future" indicates some of the

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complexity of his discussion of time and space, and their crisscrossing in the pattern of the railway track, the railway station, and railway technology. His essay begins with W.G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz,* and an encounter at Antwerp's Centraal railway station, a building that celebrates the imperial wealth and power of late nineteenth-century Belgium by appropriating the architectural forms of the Christian Middle Ages. It is fitting that Sebald's novel, which is so interested in memory, identity and temporality, should open in a building that works so hard to disguise its own historicity. Antwerp Centraal, like St Pancras in London, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai and Point of Rocks MARC station in Maryland, USA, is a nineteenth-century railway station built in the Gothic style. The architectural and cultural histories of these buildings reveal the passage and transfer of traditions and bodies and what Austerlitz calls the creation of "medieval associations" between times, places, people and events. His essay interrogates this deployment of medieval art alongside modern technology to examine a transnational phenomenon which speaks of colonial and industrial history, which embeds old trauma as well as the history of ideas of the medieval in the modern world. Davies offers a far-reaching analysis of the cultural and visual apparatus that is the American railway, shaping it for, and locating it in, a new American/Medieval archive.

Mary Kate Hurley's "'Scars of History': *Game of Thrones* and American Origin Stories" considers a popular TV series and its relation to trauma, history, and national self-understanding. In an article called "On Writing," George R.R. Martin, author of *Song of Ice and Fire,* on which *Game of Thrones* is based, makes a stark distinction between the reality of the modern world and the refuge provided by fantasy fiction in the following observation about the gap between modern life and the refuge of fantasy literature:

> Reality is the strip malls of Burbank, the smokestacks of Cleveland, a parking garage in Newark. Fantasy is the towers of Minas Tirith, the ancient stones of Gormenghast, the halls of Camelot. Fantasy flies on the wings of Icarus, reality on Southwest Airlines. Why do our dreams become so much smaller when they finally come true?…There is something old and true in fantasy that speaks to something deep within us, to the child who dreamt that one day he would hunt the forests of the night, and feast beneath the hollow hills, and find a love to last forever somewhere south of Oz and north of Shangri-La. They can keep their heaven. When I die, I'd sooner go to middle Earth.[14]

Martin's words here resonate with the strong reaction his *Song of Ice and Fire* has received among American audiences. Martin's thoughts drift, oddly, from the modern fantasy of Tolkien to the medieval(-ish) fantasy of the Arthurian legend, from Oz to Greece and Icarus to aeronautics. "There is something old," he

14 George R. R. Martin, "On Writing," http://www.georgerrmartin.com/about-george/on-writing-essays/on-fantasy-by-george-r-r-martin/ accessed 4 October 2015.

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argues, "and true." Hurley's essay challenges and interrogates this equivalence between the "old" and the "true" in order to better understand why a medieval setting is so compelling for modern audiences. Through a meditation on Erich Auerbach's analysis of Odysseus' Scar in *Mimesis,* she argues that the interruption in time provided by Martin's narrative allows non-indigenous North Americans to overlook an element of their own history they wish to avoid: the foundational violence committed against Native Americans in the founding of the United States and Canada. She suggests that the version of the American/Medieval offered by *Game of Thrones* is part of a larger desire for alternative origin stories, ones that overwrite histories of settler violence – signaling a desire for scars that belong to a fictive "us" and not to the "them" displaced by another world's legends.

Television, and the internet as discussed in Tina Boyer's essay, are media that do indeed create new archives, and they both demand our participation in this creation, and challenge us to evaluate both "the old and the true." Gale Sigal's essay offers an overview of "medievalisms" past and present in the US, and also chronicles a personal journey through place and time, a journey that creates an individual archive of the American/Medieval. Sigal's essay, "At What Price Arthur? Academic Autobiography, Medieval Studies, and the American Medieval," looks at aspects of cultural transfer from the viewpoint of an American-born European medievalist teaching in a United States institution of higher learning. She questions how personal identity colors our attitudes and approaches to our work, and how we might make the *translatio studii* to contemporary students. Sigal initially situates her argument in the context of a brief historical overview of US perceptions of the medieval, and then assembles examples of some pieces of the medieval that are most available to our students today. This contemporary slice of the American/Medieval runs the gamut from consumption of turkey legs at Renaissance Faires, to exact replicas of Excalibur for sale, to the solitary dignity of the Cloisters in New York. This inclusive A/M happily incorporates "witches, star troopers, hobbits, royals, knights, archers and pirates." Sigal's argument resists judgment or condescension, or the easy condemnation of the purist approach to what "counts" as medieval. Instead, she emphasizes that the very popularity and ubiquity of these user-friendly medieval places across the United States is perhaps their most surprising and important characteristic, and that even fantastical visions of the medieval provide a multi-layered rather than binary view of the age. They create a feedback loop to the popular and non-academic, indeed, feed a US hunger for the medieval.

Her argument concludes with a look backwards to old trauma and an affirmation of community as these both shape A/M. She examines the perennial popularity of the figure of Arthur, intensified in her experience of teaching in the American South, and conjures echoes of trauma in her speculation about the

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White South's particularly enthusiastic embrace of this most iconic piece of the medieval. In Sigal's personal journey, A/M is finally about community and diversity, and the institutional and personal comings together that are reflected in the history of this volume. Sigal's emphasis on community and her affirmation of delight in things medieval resonates with us as editors of this volume who have followed its genesis and directed its progress, but who have also been led and inspired by its contributors: the new archive is also built by such means and values.

Creatures on the Move

In this section we take an animal turn, and consider some of the ramifications of our subtitle in the entanglement of the natural and cultural, the animal and the human. The three essays follow the broad metaphorical and literal contours of creaturely movement, taking A/M into the "natural" world as narrated through time and place and considering the cultural, disciplinary and media bases for the construction of this world. Clare A. Lees' "In Three Poems: Medieval and Modern in Seamus Heaney, Maureen Duffy and Colette Bryce" considers some modern poetic flights of imagination, Margaret Zulick's "The Fox and the Furry: The Animal Tale and Virtual Narrative in Rhetorical Narrative Analysis" takes us into a virtual world of animal and human co-existence, and Ulrike Wiethaus' "The Black Swan and Pope Joan: Double Lives and the American/Medieval" looks at some of our twin animal selves and their medieval antecedents. The "creatures" in these essays offer new ways to imagine the processes of both natural and cultural transfer that A/M embodies, or perhaps, new shape-shifting embodiments of A/M.

Clare Lees' "In Three Poems: Medieval and Modern in Seamus Heaney, Maureen Duffy and Colette Bryce" offers close readings of a selection of modern poems and their complex intersectional means of reinterpreting the early medieval past. Her purview is both local and global, detailing how complex currents of poetry and culture flow between the sixth and the twenty-first century across what is now modern-day Northern Ireland, Scotland and England, and on to the US and back again, revealing how the medieval sources the modern poetic imagination. These poems witness how poetic understandings of place and environment, and of the animal and natural world, are marked by a temporality both medieval and modern. Lees traces the working of early medieval Irish literature into Heaney's creative imagination in the lyric sequence of "Hermit Songs" from his final collection, *Human Chain* (2010), and also considers two other creative encounters with the sixth and seventh centuries: Duffy's "Lex Innocentis 697" from *Environmental Studies* (2013); and Bryce's "Asylum" in

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The Whole & Rain-Domed Universe (2014). In choosing these three poems, her intent is to suggest just how present is early medieval literary culture in contemporary English-language poetry, whether in that by long-established writers such as Heaney or Duffy, both of whom have drawn on medieval literature throughout their careers, or in the more recent generation of poets such as Colette Bryce, born like Heaney in Northern Ireland although some thirty years after him.

Her discussion of these processes of poetic transfer evokes the presence of the environment, a deeply felt sense of place, and the flight and passage of both birds and the imagination. For Seamus Heaney, the persona of mad exiled King Sweeney, "the bird-man," forges a way for Heaney to explore the writing of poetry across time, in which the early medieval past with its conflicts about faith and belief, writing and poetry grounds lyrical access to a more immediate, personal and differently conflicted present. The flight of the bird-man carries over through time; the bird-man turned poet has flown – migrated – but without easy resolution or settlement. Maureen Duffy's work is more politically engaged in that it addresses the harsh realities of violence and oppression as these manifest over time. Her modern poem, inspired by a story from the life of St Columba, is an elegy for the high price and "bitter fruit" of those innocently killed and persecuted whether in war or for gender, ethnicity, race or faith, medieval and modern. In Bryce's poem, the bird image returns; here, following another story told of St. Columba, the heron is the hungry and exhausted guest to be nurtured, enabling it to fly home. This poem, Lees argues, illustrates Columba's foreknowledge and prophetic abilities and is pre-eminently about time – about the rhetorical power of prophetic utterances to fly through time like a bird, like a dove perhaps, through storms and reach fine weather; like words. Indeed, her chapter lyrically follows "the long craft of words and stories, past and present, shadowing one another, moving from place to place, breathing new meanings into old ones." Lees creates a different, poetic space for the American/Medieval as she demonstrates how each poem curates new homes for the past in the lyric present, but also is clear to point out that they do so in ways far removed from those of the heritage industry or forms of medievalism invested in recreation and reconstruction.

In her essay "The Fox and the Furry: The Animal Tale and Virtual Narrative in Rhetorical Narrative Analysis," Margaret Zulick works through classic narrative theories to extract a methodology which may assist us in identifying surviving family resemblances of the animal tale over time. Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines the concept of survival as "the state or fact of continuing to live or exist especially in spite of difficult conditions. Something from an earlier period that

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still exists or is done."[15] The very term "survival" generates interesting questions for the continuing appeal of animal tales – to what degree can an identifiable cultural practice or text with pre-modern parallels be seen as a survival of its older self rather than as a phenomenon *sui generis?* Can a distinction be made between the complexity of survival ("to live or exist especially in spite of difficult conditions") and comparatively simple continuity that is easy to track and to document? Does the productive transatlantic transposition of medieval creatureliness (something that "lives" and "exists" in a spatio-temporal life-world) play a specific, unique, and necessary role in our assumptions about the continuity between settler cultures and their places of origin, and their fracturing in modalities of survival?

Zulick suggests that the genre of animal tales constitutes both an example of our enduring affinity for the animal world and the enormous usefulness of traditional public narrative forms of expressing such animal affinity as it populates and animates electronic media today. The animal tale elucidates the way fact and fiction intertwine in narrative form in the minds of a public online audience, a medium where as in the past, there is little distinction between speaker or writer and audience or reader. In Zulick's case study, the genre of animal tales is shown metamorphosing from Aesop's fables into the medieval beast epics of Ysengrimus and Reynart the Fox, then finding its way via Fritz the Cat into the internet Furries Wars. Neither archetypal hero's journey nor cosmogonic myth, the animal tale with its attendant humor, wit, and merciless take on the pettiness of ordinary life offers a highly accessible and often cruelly truthful platform for the critique of mundane behavior inaccessible through other narrative genres.

The third essay in this section, Ulrike Wiethaus' "The Black Swan and Pope Joan: Double Lives and the American/Medieval," evokes another aspect of animal creatureliness, that of shape shifting and doubling. Swans rather than herons or foxes emerge into sight here, but like them, are creatures of the Northern hemisphere on both sides of the Atlantic since their ancient beginnings. Known for their monogamy and beauty, swans have figured prominently in European mythology. The final essay of this collection, an extension of an earlier chapter for an electronic Festschrift, explores the need for shape-shifting and a human double in the context of feminism, and takes a look at three contemporary films, *Black Swan, She… Who Would Be Pope,* and *Pope Joan/Die Päpstin.*[16] Wiethaus builds her argument on German historian Ernst Kantorowicz' study of the medieval royal double, an ideological trope claiming the

15 Merriam Webster Dictionary, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/survival.

16 *Black Swan* (Darren Aronofsky, 2010); *She… Who Would Be Pope* (Michael Anderson, 1972); *Pope Joan/Die Päpstin* (Sönke Wortmann, 2009).

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theological, legal and political bifurcation between office and person. Kantorowicz' life itself can be read as a poignant example of American/ Medieval transatlantic exchange. His academic prospects curtailed by Nazi politics, Kantorowicz fled Germany in 1933 to settle at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1939. He was not interested in the gendered implications of his work; Wiethaus' essay's title is a wordplay on his scholarship as much as it is a reflection of the gendered tension between the personal and the political. Reversing the trajectory that Kantorowicz mapped, the chapter argues that women's political and cultural work is to recuperate the body/embodiment from the supra-individual office or ideological holding place of power. The medieval tale of the fairy lover, the Russian folk tale of the white duck – a possible source of the Swan Lake plot line – and the medieval legend of Pope Joan prove to be vital resources for the cultural re-conceptualizing of women's "two bodies" on the threshold of political activism.

Always the carrier of an aura of numinosity and uncanniness, the concept and counter-narrative of a supernatural double and its shape-shifting qualities have existed in excess of the theocratic legitimization and legalization of monarchy and papacy and its Christian manifestation (i. e., as the dogma of hypostatic union, which declares that Jesus Christ is equally human and divine, with these two natures present in one person). Wiethaus' essay proposes that the doubling phenomenon is alive and well in literature and film, the arts, and folk tales, known as the shadow double and the Doppelgänger, or double walker, a German word coined by Romantic writer Jean Paul (1763–1825). Propelled in the US in no small part by the influential work of radical Catholic and later on Pagan theologian/thealogian Mary Daly, the eighties bore witness to the feminist manifestation of the double in the US – as body and as office – in the form of countless negotiations of "Woman is dead, long live woman." It was also the decade of a transition from second wave feminism to postfeminism and in tandem, the gradual institutionalization of American Indian and Indigenous studies, cultural studies, queer studies, and postcolonial studies at US universities. All constituted efforts to overcome the normative hegemonic violence of a White settler state ideology.

Conclusion

The contributors and the editors offer these various, disparate, provocative, benign, discomfiting and lyrical considerations of what the American/Medieval might be in the spirit of an ongoing and evolving conversation. Our volume aims to carve, to shape a path through the relatively uncharted territory opened up by a plethora of questions. We aim not to claim it or to demarcate it, but to ask what

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indeed might be newly discovered about our understanding of the American, of the Medieval, and of the American/Medieval, by exploring the tides of transfer between them. Our three axioms – that A/M encodes settler state trauma, that it generates new archives, and that it transfers cultural ways of being in and with nature and its creatures – manifest to some degree in almost all of the essays collected here and spill into daily life in ever new and surprising ways. The legend of the Black Swan is danced on Second Life; 2016 presidential candidates such as Ted Cruz evoke the anti-Semitic stereotype of Wall Street; Slender Man keeps prowling, an internet monster as busy as ever closing the Gutenberg parenthesis between the literate and the oral as is true of the Furries. The vitality of the Medieval asks for another kind of hypostatic union declaration. The Medieval is dead, long live the Medieval.

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