

Preface

In this volume's call for papers (cfp), applicants were invited to submit "feature articles of 6,000–12,000 words (including notes) on any postmedieval responses to the Middle Ages" or 3,000-word essays that respond to one or more of the following questions:

[W]hat relevance does [tribalism] have for medievalism? For medievalism studies? Does it accurately capture the way one or more communities within those fields are perceived by their own members and/or others? How, if at all, do these newer applications apply to the traditional uses of the term? How does the word relate to practices among medievalists, by medievalists with regard to their medieval sources, by scholars of medievalism with regard to their subjects, and among scholars of medievalism?

The cfp anchors those questions in its claim that "Traditional applications of the word 'tribal' in medievalism studies and elsewhere in academia have recently come under intense criticism and sometimes been censored. Yet, in broader cultural contexts, the term seems to be gaining ever-greater currency as a synonym for group identity, particularly of a partisan nature." And those who responded to the cfp did indeed find implicit and sometimes explicit forms of tribalism in many different venues and behind a diverse array of agendas. Moreover, many of the contributors evidently (and sometimes admittedly) felt so passionate about their subject and found such complex and extensive examples, that they were unable to confine themselves to the traditional word limit for the thematic essays. Thus, in a break with the last eighteen installments of this series, this volume does not feature such a section.

Instead, it leads with Emma Nuding's feature article, "'Hair Cut Short Like a Mediæval Page': Queer Medievalisms in Gwen Lally's Historical Pageants and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928)," which details how two early-twentieth-century works reflect and foster new forms of tribalism in sexual orientation. As Lally played an amorous Henry V opposite her real-life lover in a 1928 recreation of the Wars of the Roses, and as Hall traced a doomed love affair between two female medievalists in her novel from that same year, they helped establish and promote medievalism subgroups that revolve around particular gender-identities and/or sexual orientation. In upholding yet queering conservative medievalism, they created

new, even more exclusive affiliations that implicitly supersede the larger forms of inclusion on which they build.

And in many ways that same narrative unfolds in the late-twentieth-century focus of Christopher Queen's essay "I thought I would be a Chaucerian": Robert Glück, the Medievalism of New Narrative, and *Margery Kempe*. In analyzing Glück's 1994 novel, which ostensibly retells the fifteenth-century *Book of Margery Kempe*, and on the basis of multiple discussions with Glück, Queen argues that Glück represents and, indeed, helps establish an important new approach that only partially overlaps those of much larger communities of literary and medievalist discourse, for, in pairing Kempe's love of Christ with the waning gay-romance of a semi-autobiographical protagonist, Glück introduces a highly personal, queer medievalism that critics almost universally found discomfiting. That is, by bringing the overt self-reflexivity and blatant narratological aesthetic of the New Narrative movement to a no-less-obvious love for medieval literature, Glück helps inaugurate a tribe that overlaps others but, in the selectivity with which it does so, ultimately represents a new approach for a distinct community.

Of course, behind such adventures in sexual orientation, as Queen and especially Nuding make clear, lies tribal gendering – the focus of Kalina Janeva's essay "I Will Send to Them Women": Josephine Butler's *Catharine of Siena: A Biography* (1878), Female Food Abstinence, and Victorian Feminist Medievalism." In exploring how Butler deployed a fourteenth-century saint to promote compassion, service, and political engagement among readers, particularly those who identified as female, Janeva not only reveals a great deal about how gender (and religion) were perceived by Butler, by Butler's colleagues, and by Butler's anticipated audience, but also shows how those perceptions played into and often constructed communities among and perhaps beyond those literary circles. Moreover, in focusing on the use of a medieval catalyst for the formation of those tribes, Janeva demonstrates how medievalism as a form of tribalism can reinforce, supersede, and sometimes contest other forms of inclusivity that pointedly distinguish its members from the uninitiated.

That discussion is, in many ways, carried forward in time by Anna Steppeler's essay, "Noble Maiden Fair": Music and the Construction of Gender in Disney/Pixar's *Brave* and Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*." In contrasting how the female protagonist is characterized musically and more broadly in these movies from 2012 and 1959, respectively, Steppeler argues that the innovative and defiant Merida from the later film serves as a corrective to the conformist, docile model of Aurora in the earlier film. Thus, a new tribal identity that revolves around a more liberated portrayal of femininity, as refracted through medievalist tropes, situates *Brave*'s princess, and the fans who identify with her, as opposites to and improvements on the conservative tribe populated by *Sleeping Beauty* and her fans.

The flip side of those feminine tribes is then examined by Ann F. Howey in “Becoming a Man in Narnia: Adaptation, Medievalism, and Masculinity in *Prince Caspian*.” Particularly by contrasting the 2008 film version with C. S. Lewis’s 1951 installment in his *Chronicles of Narnia* book series, Howey addresses anxiety there and elsewhere about boys’ ability to adopt appropriate masculine behaviors in moving to adulthood. And in her interpretation, the cinematic shift from a focus on faith to a struggle for kingship – that is, to a medievalist focus on violence and domination – endorses a quintessentially tribal form of chivalric masculinity that suggests the enduring power of Victorian and Edwardian links between gender and medievalism.

In “‘Where Men Lived After the Manner of Beasts’: Bandits in Medieval Worlds,” James Robert Burns makes similar links to the performative masculinity in medieval and modern portrayals of a particular kind of ruffian. In seeking to expand the discussion of bandits beyond the common focus on Robin Hood and his “merry” band, Burns explores not only late-medieval interpretations of early-medieval bandits as threatening, usually anonymous wild men, but also more recent literary, cinematic, and gaming treatment of medieval bandits as shadowy “creatures” who live apart from communities of men and whose violence is therefore detached from masculinity. In being thus othered during the late Middle Ages as well as in nineteenth-century and later medievalism, the bandits are presented as a tribe of their own that, by its very distinction, points to the traditional tribes of masculinity, to tribalism itself, and to the Middle Ages’ protean ability to support a wide range of perceptions and affiliations.

Indeed, as Kevin J. Harty demonstrates in “The Musical *Camelot* and Colonial Medieval Tribalism in Richard E. Grant’s 2005 Film *Wah-Wah*,” medievalism is so hermeneutically flexible that it can be deployed as commentary on issues quite far from gender and sexual orientation. In his study of extraordinarily literal examples of tribalism, Harty examines the many ways that Grant remarks on British imperialism in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) as it plays out in the staging of a medievalist musical for Princess Margaret to celebrate Swazi independence. In the overt hypocrisies inherent in this quasi-historical account, tribalism on all sides and of many sorts looms large and comes in for proportional condemnation, as its divisionism corresponds to desperately real and enduring abuse of many communities.

A no-less-malevolent tribalism is also the focus of Ryan Hellenbrand’s and Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand’s study of American frontier attitudes toward Native Americans as expressed through German manifestations of national pride. In “Narratives of Belonging: Arminius and Autochthony between the Minnesota Prairie and German Forests,” they discuss how the contemporary German television series *Barbaren* echoes nineteenth-century commemorations by German settlers in the American Midwest, as the show draws analogies between, on the one hand, Native Americans and, on the

other hand, Arminius and his compatriots. Romantic, patronizing, highly distorted perceptions of America's indigenous people as "noble savages" are grafted onto mythologized memories of early northern European heroes in a perverse twinning that, as it lumps them together in a transnational, diachronic tribe, does a tremendous disservice to the suffering and highly distinct identities of both communities.

Far less crude, far less blatantly nationalistic, and far less overtly condescending is the treatment of Native Americans discussed by Sylwia Borowska-Szerszun in "King Arthur and Imagined Indians: The Entanglement of Medievalist and Indigenous Elements in Guy Gavriel Kay's *Fionavar Tapestry*." But, as Borowska-Szerszun points out, this Canadian trilogy of novels from 1984–86 is not without prejudice, for in its fantasy of five Torontians magically transported to a world in which all myths, sagas, and tales of other worlds originate, it patronizingly conflates the Arthurian Dalrei Riders with Native Americans as "Imaginary Indians." While ostensibly flattering in seeing the chivalric Riders as medievalist parallels to Native American warriors, it, like the particular German nationalism discussed by Hellenbrand and Sterling-Hellenbrand, flattens the indigenous people of North America into stereotypes that are then incorporated into a transnational diachronic tribe shared by mythologized heroes from medieval Europe.

Much more divorced from the historical horrors in which such prejudices originated and were nurtured, yet perhaps no less martial, fervent, and medievalist are the tribal passions discussed by Scott Manning in "Arthurian Legend and the Death of Optimus Prime in *Transformers: The Movie* (1986)." Springing from a much more direct study of tribalism in that film, this essay explores fan reactions to the death of a favorite character in a beloved literary and film series. Amid the outraged response to this surprising and highly medievalist plot twist emerges a blatantly tribal unity among fans who identify with Optimus Prime and who, despite hints that he may enjoy an Arthurian return, define themselves in opposition to the "callous" tribe of show runners.

Far lighter, though perhaps even more tribal, are the subjects of Dana M. Polanichka's "Laughing at a Carolingian Legacy: Medievalism and Charlemagne Legends in Twentieth-Century America." In discussing how the Carolingian age is interpreted in John Steinbeck's 1957 satire *The Short Reign of Pippin IV: A Fabrication* and Ron Straus and Stephen Schwartz's 1972 Broadway musical *Pippin*, Polanichka describes how these works comment on contemporaneous politics – and thereby echoed and perhaps nurtured particular tribal identities within that world – yet promote and expand those affiliations by deploying humor as an opening to other political tribes. Carolingian legends as medievalism thus manages to reflect yet supersede a form of tribalism that otherwise tends to be extraordinarily and virulently divisive.

In pointing to the fact that some kinds of medievalism may render intra-national tribalism porous and/or fluid, Polanichka balances evidence elsewhere in this volume that tribalism can, often quite harmfully, divide a nation. And many of the volume's contributors demonstrate that some kinds of medievalism may make national borders themselves quite porous and/or fluid, relative to tribal perspectives on gender, sexual orientation, and other cultural constructs. Moreover, all the contributors indicate ways in which medievalism and the study of it have contributed to those affiliations, even as the latter have shaped medievalism and the study of it. Indeed, taken as a whole and sometimes even in parts, this volume calls for a reexamination of not only the tribalisms within medievalism (studies) and of which medievalism (studies) are a part but also the possibility that medievalism, the study of it, or a combination of the two, constitutes a form of tribalism all its own, that, like so many individual deployers and/or scholars of medievalism, one or both of these entire areas may embody a form of tribalism particular, delimiting, and/or perhaps damaging to it/them.

