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Book Review, Richard Utz and Tom Shippey (eds), Medievalism and the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie Workman

Louise D'Arcens
University of Wollongong, louised@uow.edu.au

Richard Utz and Tom Shippey, eds.

Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie Workman.

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Reviewed by Louise D'Arcens

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As an area of enquiry, the academic study of medievalism has seemed constitutionally, and indeed institutionally, marginal. Neither fish nor fowl, its interdisciplinarity has long consigned it in the eyes of many medievalists to the shadowy realm of para-disciplinarity, seemingly doomed to the task of merely commenting on the work of others. In recent years, however, Anglophone medieval studies has witnessed the growing momentum of what might be called a "medievalist turn". The emergence of numerous studies of the historical and political forces buttressing the emergence of the discipline, along with the biographical studies of Helen Damico and Norman Cantor, have encouraged us not only to situate reflexivity at the heart of our critical and methodological practices but also to locate ourselves within an ever-changing tradition of historical interpretation. Nevertheless, as the editors of Medievalism in the Modern World remind us, the study of the "post-medieval reinvention of medieval culture" (4) is no 1990s debutante, but has been making steady if embattled headway since the mid-1970s, growing up in the cracks between disciplines, largely due to the energy and commitment of Leslie Workman, founder and former editor of *Studies in Medievalism*.

It is fitting, then, that this, the inaugural volume of Brepols' Making the Middle Ages series, should honour Workman's indisputable role in the establishment of medievalist studies. The range and the quality of the essays collected here bear eloquent testimony to the impact of this scholar's work across the humanities in the English-speaking world and beyond. The volume features work by medieval scholars venturing beyond their customary analysis of medieval literature, early modern scholars, Victorianists, Germanic scholars, Icelandicists, codicologists, and even a dramatist and composer. It also contains essays by a number of regular contributors to Studies in Medievalism and other medievalist forums, including Kathleeen Verduin, William Paden, Paul Szarmach, William Calin, Clare Simmons, Nils Holger Petersen, John Simon, and the volume's editors Richard Utz and Tom Shippey. One essay in the collection also marks the welcome return of another pioneer, Alice Chandler, who has worked farther afield since the 1970 publication of her landmark study, A Dream of Order.

This compendious volume embeds its twenty-four essays firmly within the framework of its homage to Workman. The introductory essay traces Workman's nurturing of the study of medievalism, and pays tribute to his ongoing belief in the importance of this study in the face of the dismissiveness of others and the absence of institutional support. This note of overt tribute recurs throughout many of the volume's

essays, with the authors signalling their debt to Workman's pioneering work. Especially notable in this regard are the contributors' references to Workman's numerous definitions of the term "medievalism", as outlined in his Studies in Medievalism Introductions. Indeed, one of the conspicuous strengths of the volume is the continual revision and finessing of this term throughout its essays, creating a definitional flexibility that reflects the breadth and variation of the object of analysis. The concluding interview between Workman and Richard Utz reminds us that while we can to some extent attribute scholarly developments to intellectual or cultural paradigm shifts, we should never discount the force of individual imagination and tenacity. Workman's account in this interview of his own singular intellectual path from childhood to the present also demonstrates ¡ most appositely, given the often deeply personal nature of medievalism ¡ the equal importance of the public and private self in the forging of a scholarly passion.

The organisation of this large volume into five loosely chronological and thematic sections helps guide the reader through what occasionally threatens to become an unwieldy reading experience. In their introduction, Utz and Shippey rightly point out that to divide an essay collection into sections is to risk overdetermining or limiting readers' responses to individual essays, which invariably fit into more than one of the always-provisional categories. This sensitivity to the separate essays' polyvalency is carried over in the decision not to place any dividing apparatus into the main body of the volume. Nevertheless, more signposting throughout the volume, perhaps in the form of titled dividing pages or even short introductory remarks prefacing each section, might have assisted in making a cover-to-cover reading more manageable, and would have reminded the reader of the organisational principles adumbrated in the introductory chapter. That being said, perhaps a less linear reading is more appropriate for this volume, in which case its open structure liberates the reader to restructure it according to his or her own interest.

The first section, "Watersheds Re-Examined", effectively extends the historical scope of medievalism beyond its conventional association with Victorian culture, by including a number of essays discussing early modern uses of the medieval past. The editors situate this extended scope within what they articulate as a "new paradigm of medievalism as inclusive of any and all previous attempts at rewriting and/or rethinking the medieval past" (5).

The "Watershed" with which this section begins is the meeting of Old World and New. In her "The Anxiety of Authority and Medievalising the New World", Teresa Ann Sears takes Harold Bloom's famous phrase concerning cultural inheritance and refigures it in terms of the relationship between pre-modern and early modern identity in Spanish conquest narratives. Extending the work she has done elsewhere, Sears examines how the Spanish conquistadores authorised their "discovery" of the New World with reference to medieval heroic models and to the medieval reconquista of Spain from the Moors. This piece is also important for being the only essay, in what is an essentially Northern-oriented volume, focusing on medievalism in Romance culture. The New World focus reappears in the final essay in this section, Bernard Rosenthal's study of the 1692 Salem Witch Trials. Here Rosenthal not only analyses the reliance in this early American colony on a retrospective fantasy of the medieval Old World as ruled by irrationality and

populated by witches, but also points out the extent to which modern "watershed" studies of the Salem trials have been complicit in this hiving off of modern from pre-modern.

Both Richard Osberg's discussion of the 1533 coronation procession for Anne Boleyn and John Simons' essay on early modern author Christopher Middleton offer critiques of periodisation by demonstrating the ways in which early modern culture in England can be seen to harbour "the return of the repressed" in the form of an incompletely-banished medieval past. Osberg's analysis examines the iconography surrounding Anne, and establishes that it not only actively connected her both to the present and to the medieval dynastic past, but even deployed Marian imagery to ratify her queenship. Through the example of Christopher Middleton, John Simons extends a growing body of work which aims to "medievalise" the literature of the English Renaissance by demonstrating the continued interest in medieval narrative, an even the continuing circulation of these narratives in manuscript form, among the citizen authors of the late-sixteenth century.

The volume's second section, "Appropriating the Past", is both English and German in its focus. The motif of appropriation, whilst applicable to all sections of the volume, here signifies the modern use of a narrative of the medieval past to validate a political situation or to authorise a political aspiration. The essays here extend current scholarship on the pivotal medievalist themes of nationalism and cultural identity.

In her essay "Absent Presence: The Romantic-Era Magna Charta and the English Constitution" Clare Simmons analyses a range of interpretations of the Magna Charta within late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English political thought. The Derridean resonance of the essay's title is apt, as Simmons examines how this document signified as a kind of polysemous historico-legal trace, either establishing or confirming rights in lieu of a written consiitution. Of particular interest is the discussion of radical reformers' use of a medievalist "myth of English freedom" to pose an "alternative English past" that authorises a democratic future. This theme of mythologising a historico-legal English past is continued in R.J. Smith's account of the law of gavelkind, a singular Kentish custom of partable tenure whose wide influence (stretching to America) belies the specificity of its origins. Smith's account is remarkable for the historical span it covers in a short space, tracing the glosses and usages of this law from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. Smith's discussion of the late medieval linking of this law to a legendary past "devaunt le conquest" is significant in its suggestion that a species of medievalism can be found as early as the late Middle Ages.

The next two essays take us from England to Germany. David E. Barclay's essay recounts in vivid and often amusing detail the staging in nineteenth-century Prussia of eclectic "medieval" court festivals, complete with jousting tournaments and rituals of homage. Barclay underlines the importance of these "dynastic spectacles" for authorising the development of a state that was essentially modern and "largely articificial" (107), and for buttressing the monarchic-conservative appropriation of a medieval past which purportedly owed its harmony to its hierarchical structure. Following this, Ulrich Müller offers a fascinating account of

the medieval origin of "Deutschland, Deutschland, Über Alles", tracing the song's complex intertextual evolution from Walther von der Vogelweide's early thirteenth-century defence of German culture through to its twentieth-century reputation as the anthem for aggressive nationalism. This is admirable historico-political scholarship, engaged yet scholarly, and is significant both for its careful anatomising of German nationalism's development over several centuries, and for its attempt to deliver the "Song of the Germans" from its overdetermined relationship with modern fascism.

We then return to the question of English nationalism in Roger Simpson's wittily entitled "Saint George and the Pendragon". Simpson's discussion extends Arthurian scholarship by tracing comparatively the post-medieval fates of King Arthur and Saint George as national icons. This essay raises several hypotheses to account for St George's nineteenth-century demise, and his recent return, although none of these is offered as a conclusive explanation. Some discussion of the masculine types embodied in these two figures might have allowed the essay to bring an interesting alternative angle to current scholarship on the use of medieval figures to endorse codes of nineteenth-century English masculinity.

Reaching the third section of the volume, we see a continuation of the English-German emphasis, although this time it includes a Scandinavian inflection. Perhaps this emphasis is intended to supplement the Francophilic orientation of other volumes published in recent years. Nevertheless, in light of the editors' temporal extension of medievalism to encompass the early modern period, the volume's limited geographical ambit comes as something of a surprise. While it is undeniable that the emergence of European nationalism is a crucial development in what we think of as "the modern world", so too is European imperialism. Indeed, postcolonial historians have analysed thoroughly the nature of colonial societies as modern phenomena. As mentioned earlier, the inclusion of Sears' essay does acknowledge the historical impact of imperialism: but as someone with an active interest in the development of medieval studies and popular medievalism in Australia and the South Pacific, I would suggest that a broader conception of "The Modern World" is needed, one which takes into account the oft-forgotten world "South of the West".

Tom Shippey's discussion of the English reception of "The Death Song of Ragnar Lodbrog" traces the accidents of mistranslation which led Northern European and English scholars to both promote and suppress this text's image of the bloodthirsty, death-mocking Viking. Through this telling reception history spanning the seventeenth to the early twentieth century, Shippey explores the Death Song's status as a "simulacrum", a secondary translation of a translation ¡ and deftly exposes how the "accidents" of this text's translation can be seen to reflect the cultural sensibilities of its translators. This Nordic focus continues in Alice Chandler's essay "Carlyle and the Medievalism of the North", which examines the Teutonic focus found in a number of Carlyle's writings. Here we see Chandler returning to binarism of order / disorder which she made famous in A Dream of Order, this time to demonstrate how the Carlyle uses the usually liberal discourse of Teutonic Saxonism to formulate his conservative, vitalist validation of "force triumphing over chaos" (and democracy (182).

Werner Wunderlich's essay looks at one of the most successful examples of creative medievalism in nineteenth-century Germany, Joseph Viktor von Scheffel's romantic novel Ekkehard. An impressively detailed account of the medieval sources and the modern reception of Scheffel's novel, Wunderlich's essay is, however, also occasionally characterised by a scathing tone which marks it out from the other essays, as does its desire to posit a "true" Middle Ages which has been betrayed in Scheffel's novelisation. Two essays later we move from Scheffel's still-commemorated text to William Calin's discussion of the now largely forgotten Edwardian play Paolo and Francesca by Stephen Phillips. Calling for a rehabilitation of Stephens' neglected work, Calin offers a brief but suggestive discussion of Paolo and Francesca as an example of turn-of-the-century medievalism and, interestingly, suggests that Stephens' dramatic displacement of passion and corruption to medieval Italy is an example of what we would today call Orientalism.

Two other essays examining English literature of this period are those by Felicia Bonaparte and Kathleen Verduin. Bonaparte makes a convincing case for Oscar Wilde's critique of aestheticism through his use of a moral narrative in The Picture of Dorian Gray ¡ a narrative whose structure, Bonaparte argues, is that of the medieval morality play. While Bonaparte does offer some solid internal evidence of tropes in Dorian Gray which seem to parallel allegorical elements found in selected morality plays, her argument is at other times based on more circumstantial evidence, such as Wilde's enthusiasm for Thomas Ó Kempis, St. Augustine, and Dante. Furthermore, her own conflation of the medieval with the moral threatens to uncritically repeat one of the very conflations central to the Victorian medievalism she analyses. This conflation of medieval and moral is critiqued by Kathleen Verduin in her essay "Medievalism, Classicism, and the Fiction of E. M. Forster". Analysing Forster's abiding antimedievalism, she states "so dependent, apparently, was his self-fashioning on the binarism [between classical and medieval] that he seems never to have doubted its foundations" (273). Verduin's essay is especially admirable for pointing to the disdain for the feminine implicit in Forster's privileging of the "sensual" classical period over the "pleasure-denying" Middle Ages. It is this critical attention to issues of gender and sexuality that particularly distinguishes Verduin's essay in this volume.

The essays in the volume's fourth section "Contemporary Medievalisms" examine creative medievalism ranging from European and Hollywood cinema, modernist and popular literature, to musical drama.

William Paden's elegant and insightful essay on Ingmar Bergman's The Seventh Seal is an example of interdisciplinarity as it was meant to be: comparing the monk's sermon in The Seventh Seal to the Vers de la Mort of the twelfth-century Cistercian HÚlinant de Froidmont, Paden ranges effortlessly between film studies, medieval literature, and modern literature, drawing connections between them which surprise and yet are always plausible and convincingly-argued. The tenor of this essay is consistently sensitive to the creative nature of Bergman's medievalism: for although Paden argues that Bergman's Middle Ages is a composite historical fantasy which never existed, he concludes "in his freedom as an artist, Bergman has reinvented the Middle Ages through a dark glass, but he has reinvented with startling fidelity" (304). This sensitivity is, I would argue, a keynote of the volume as a whole, with many of the contributors overtly

eschewing (to use David Greetham's term) the scholarly Schadenfreude experienced in locating historical anachronism, in order to gain a sympathetic understanding of creative uses of the Middle Ages.

The relationship between myth and history, a consideration fundamental to medievalism, is the subject of Rosemary Welsh's essay "Theorising Medievalism: The Case of Gone with the Wind". Welsh argues not only for narrative correpondences between Celtic myths and Gone with the Wind, which make the latter an "intertext of filmic plot, American history, and ancient Celtic mythology" (307), but also attempts to draw a parallel between film and medievalism, as both amalgamate myth and history to "intersect and interrupt the flow" of time (315). While Welsh's negotiation of film theory is sometimes convoluted, it is gratifying to see an ambitious attempt to theorise medievalism as a historico-hermeneutic practice. The analysis of populist texts continues in Gwendolyn Morgan's discussion of medieval-inspired "Immortal" figures in popular fiction and in television series. In this engaged essay Morgan takes up the perennially important theme of representational ethics and combines it with a critique of the submerged yearnings within contemporary nihilism, demonstrating that while these popular texts might seem to offer modern moral allegories, they can in fact be read as catering to "a pre-millenial, popular gnostic...search for absolution" (325), enabling contemporary audiences to displace ethical responsibility onto these Immortals, who determine the destiny of human history. The final two essays in this section focus on less populist creative uses of medieval literature and history. Paul E. Szarmach adds to current scholarship on Auden's medievalism by making a strong case for the influence of Caedmon's Hymn on the poem "Anthem". In a detailed prosodic and lexical analysis of the poem, and a biographical discussion of the poet's time at Oxford, Szarmach demonstrates that Auden, although an indifferent undergraduate Anglo-Saxonist, was inspired to a love of Old English poetry by his teacher J.R.R. Tolkien. Continuing this focus on the creative use of medieval texts, we are given a first-hand insight into creative medievalism in Danish dramatist-composer Nils Holger Petersen's discussion of the compositional process behind his medievalist drama A Vigil for Thomas Becket. In outlining the relationship between historical, dramatic, and aesthetic decision-making in his creative process, Petersen's essay, like Szarmach's, shows how medievalism can offer a site of rapprochement between the academy and the creative arts.

The title of the final section "Medievalism and the Academy" - echoes that of the two most recent issues of Studies in Medievalism. Here we find four essays which continue to investigate the values and presuppositions underlying medieval studies as it has been and continues to be practiced.

As mentioned earlier, the personal passions, idiosyncracies, and indeed shortcomings of Great Scholars, and their potential to shape disciplines, has been famously thematised by Norman Cantor in Inventing the Middle Ages. This theme is taken up in Richard Utz' ""Cleansing" the Discipline: Ernst Robert Curtius and his Medievalist Turn". Here Utz focuses on Curtius' thoroughgoing demolition of his fellow-medievalist Hans Hermann Glunz, and the devastating outcome of this for Glunz. This Cantoresque essay provides a fascinating alternative portrait of a scholar whose anti-nationalist reputation, Utz suggests, sits uncomfortably alongside a more questionable ethic of scholarly ambition and intellectual dogmatism. By

considering the human expense at which Curtius' stature was achieved, the essay also offers a counter-history of medieval studies, one which ultimately makes a case for the importance of intellectual generosity and plurality within a discipline.

The political urgency present in Utz' essay is also detectible in Britton Harwood's Marxian-inflected account of "The Ideological Use of Chaucer". Harwood demonstrates the permutations of Marxian thought in recent Chaucer studies, taking as his focus Lee Patterson's Chaucer and the Subject of History and David Wallace's Chaucerian Polity. He takes issue with these studies' assertion that Chaucer shifts "from a preoccupation with social determination ... to a concern with the problematics of being an individual" (382), questioning not only their historical interpretation but also what he regards as their investment in making Chaucer "stand outside ideology" as a neutral critic. The principal concern behind Harwood's essay is pedagogical: what are the implications of presenting Chaucer as politically neutral? He argues that it will result in quietism in a student body already characterised by politically disengaged individualism. While Harwood forcefully reminds us that our narration of the past determines our students' response to the present, the questions of which ideological Chaucer is the "correct" one, and what is at stake for us in making Chaucer "correct" for our students, are ultimately not settled in this essay.

When reading David Metzger's analysis of "Medievalism and the Problem of Radical Evil in Snodgrass's The Fuehrer Bunker" it is initially less apparent why it is included in this section. This becomes clearer, however, when we reach Metzger's analysis of medievalist motifs, and in particlar allegory, in the work of Frederic Jameson. Metzger's language is occasionally opaque, and his essay could have offered more information about Snodgrass' text to orient readers unfamiliar with it; neverthless it is valuable in its attempt to deal through literature with issues conventionally deemed the province of moralists and philosophers. The concluding essay, David Greetham's "Romancing the Text, Medievalising the Book" discusses the ways in which medievalists' understanding of the manuscript tradition challenges the concept of ideal-text editing. Whilst expressing scepticism about anti-modernist "pomo romantic" enthusiasm for electronic text, Greetham cautiously suggests some of the ways in which hypertext editing might provide a postmodern parallel to the open text of medieval manuscript culture. In terms reminiscent of Paul Zumthor's conceptualisation of the mouvance of the medieval text, Greetham formulates the instability of the medieval "book" in terms of Derridean différance. Some direct engagement with Zumthor would have enabled Greetham to situate his work productively in dialogue with Francophone medieval scholarship as well as the prominent Anglophone scholars he cites.

In sum, this is a most worthy volume which, although almost intimidating in its size, accurately and comprehensively reflects the historical and methodological breadth of current research in medievalism, and the achievements of the man it honours.

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