
About the Cover



Adad Hannah, *The Raft of the Medusa (100 Mile House) 8*
Cover image © Adad Hannah (2009); photograph courtesy of the artist.

postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies (2015) 6, 359–360.
doi:10.1057/pmed.2015.45

In 2009, the artist Adad Hannah traveled to 100 Mile House in Central British Columbia (a community of about 2000 persons) to re-stage, with the local community's involvement as models and assistants, Théodore Géricault's monumental painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–1819) as a *tableau vivant*. As Hannah writes on his website:

Géricault chose to paint a scene from a recent tragedy, the sinking of the French ship *Méduse* in 1816, and the plight of the survivors, who, left to their own devices, succumbed to cannibalism, dehydration, and insanity as their numbers shrunk from an initial 150 passengers to the final fifteen who were discovered by accident two weeks later. The finished canvas measured a giant 16' by 23.5' and was eventually purchased by the Louvre shortly after the artist's death in 1824. The community of 100 Mile House has been ravaged itself, if somewhat slower and less dramatically than the passengers of the raft, by downturns in the cattle and forestry industries.

When the BABEL Working Group was organizing in 2013 the two linked symposia, 'Critical/Liberal/Arts,' out of which this special issue emerged



1 For more information about this project, go here: http://adadhannah.com/projects/show/the_raft_of_the_medusa_100_mile_house/.

(at the University of California, Irvine and The Graduate Center, City University of New York), we stumbled across the still images from Hannah's *Raft* project,¹ and we were struck by how apropos they were, not only to the situation of economic precariousness in a neoliberal age, but also to the situation of a humanities increasingly under siege in an age of legislative austerity measures leading to the actual defunding of programs within the humanities at many universities, the techno-managerial takeover of many universities' administrations, and ever-growing hostility toward creative and speculative forms of 'liberal arts' scholarship from politicians, business leaders, ideologically driven policy institutes and the like. We thus envision this special issue of *postmedieval* as one of many such life rafts launched in the wake of troubled and troubling times within public higher education. And despite the cannibalism, dehydration and insanity that plagued the original travelers aboard the *Medusa*, we (perhaps) perversely glimpse in Hannah's re-staging of the post-traumatic epic scene a hopeful solidarity, a sticking-together and a light breaking over the horizon.

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