Editors' Introduction

Medieval studies: the stakes of the field

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...we must constantly encourage ourselves and each other to attempt the
heretical actions that our dreams imply
– Lorde, 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury'

This is an issue of revolt. It revolts against those who find its contents, contributors, and contributions revolting. The global resurgence of fascist leaders, the violent terrorist attacks of white supremacists against communities of color, and the hateful rhetoric, with often deadly consequence, that has dominated our public and private forums of life make it all too clear that we must push back against institutionally-sanctioned cruelty with our collective

might in order to protect each other and the futures that we imagine.¹ Our calamitous times demand action, and this issue of *postmedieval* seizes our field's megaphone.

This issue presents the second half of *postmedieval*'s 10th anniversary series. In it, we reclaim the collective revolting existence of those who are not cisgender, male, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, neurotypical, middle class, or Christian, a revolting existence that institutional powers – schools, families, hospitals, religious communities, the prison-industrial complex – continually attempt to purge. Our issue asks a deceptively simple question: 'Whose voices matter in medieval studies?' This question attends to the voices in the literary-historical record and to the voices of the scholars who engage that archive. The essays in this collection address issues of race, embodiment, and difference, but more specifically, they address matters of inclusion and visibility within these larger conversations. Locating the eroding effects of normativity in the process of self-disidentification, José Esteban Muñoz explains that assimilation to dominant and domineering ideologies is grounded in a misrecognition of self. 'The price of the ticket is this,' Muñoz writes, 'to find self within the dominant public sphere, we need to deny self' (Muñoz, 1999, 95). The dominant public sphere of the field of medieval studies – its intellectual and social histories – has hosted a masturbatory practice of self-referentiality that desires and reifies a white, predominately cisgender and male, Middle Ages. As Audre Lorde reminds us in her essay 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury,' from which the epigraph is taken, poetry is 'a revelatory distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word *poetry* to mean – in order to cover a desperate wish for imagination without insight' (Lorde, 1985, 37). Lorde's critique of the sterility that white academics have imported to the study of literature is not only a reflection of a barren imagination but also an attempt to *sterilize* literature from voices which the 'white fathers' see as impure and adulterated.

As scholars of the past, medievalists are trained to be attentive to the anonymous voice, the personified voice, the divine voice, the ghostly voice, the voice of the dead, and yet so much scholarship has disregarded the voices of living colleagues in the field. In this anniversary issue, we prioritize contributions from graduate students, early career researchers, and precarious scholars, and we create a platform for BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Color] scholars and queer and transgender scholars because these voices are too often excised from publishing, denied financial and institutional support, and deprived of resources that might otherwise contribute to increased academic successes. Additionally, our issue is heavy with literary historians, and while this is partially a reflection of the submissions received, we hope that archaeologists, historians, and art historians, some of whom contributed to the review process,

1 In this issue, we seek to constantly question 'who is *we*?' in the spirit of Adrienne Rich's essay 'Notes Toward a Politics of Location' (1984, 231).

will find the contents here instructive and continue this work in future collaborations. In other words, this issue is only one of many possible revolts.

‘Revolting is a powerful word’ (Tyler, 2013, 3). In her work on abjection in neoliberal Britain, Imogen Tyler explores the two registers of *revolting* – revolution and disgust – that join forces as modes of resistance. This dual meaning of *revolt(ing)* is expressed as a ‘process through which minoritized populations are imagined and configured as revolting and become subject to control, stigma, and censure, and the practices through which individuals and groups resist, reconfigure and revolt against their abject subjectification’ (Tyler, 2013, 3–4). A revolting subject is a figure who is imagined to threaten power and who resists becoming subject to the regimes that seek to control and censure.² Many scholars in medieval studies have called attention to the underlying – and increasingly overt – white supremacy within the field.³ As the faces and voices of this introduction and subsequent essays, we editors, alongside our contributors, are the revolting presence that the white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, economically stable academic elite fear. The variegated faces and voices of this volume represent scholars of color, queer and transgender scholars, non-tenured and precarious scholars, and folks committed to anti-racist scholarship.

A word of caution: that the word *revolt* comes from the Latin *revolvere*, ‘to roll back, unravel,’⁴ does not mean that we should move forward only to turn around again. We acknowledge the violence in such a turning. Instead, let us galvanize our revolt through its Middle English term, *risen*, which means, variously, ‘to rise up, revolt, rise from the dead.’⁵ Let us be necromancers of the past in order to steward lives in the present. It is in rising up that revolution breaks out of orbit and creates universes entirely new.

The stakes of a revolting field

What is the work of our revolt? Our field does not need a reformation but rather a demolition. We mean this in the spirit of the word itself: demolition, from the Latin *demolire*, meaning to destroy and tear down; it is an inversion of its central verb, *molire*, ‘to struggle, labor, and build.’ To demolish, in this sense, is to undertake the labor of destroying a structure built with an exclusionary, elitist architecture. An architecture made to protect what it contains and to limit who it allows within its walls is an architecture of white supremacist patriarchy. What envelops this *ivory tower* is a field of green, with air to breathe and room to grow. We write and invite from that greenery.

For too long, the academic community of medieval scholars has responded to anti-racist critiques of medieval studies (particularly critiques of early English studies) by reflecting on the ‘state of the field.’ These well-intentioned ruminations raise awareness about where our field has grown and where it

- 2 Tyler’s work revises Julia Kristeva’s (1982) paradigms of abjection that violently recapitulate rather than challenge the imperial and colonial projects that generate abject subjects.
- 3 See Kim (2017), Miyashiro (2017), Lomuto (2016), and Rambaran-Olm (2018).
- 4 Lewis and Short (1891, s.v. ‘revolvere’).
- 5 Kurath (1952–2000, s.v. ‘risen’).

has fallen short, but they nevertheless bind us to the same, violent models of scholarship, pedagogy, and community outreach that maintain a core of whiteness and white supremacy. Donna Beth Ellard's *Anglo-Saxon(ist) Pasts, postSaxon Futures* provides a thorough review of these reflections, focusing on the imperialism and racism embedded in medieval studies (and the term 'Anglo-Saxon' in particular). For the purposes of this Introduction, we would like to draw attention to a few statements that exemplify how medieval studies, even when contemplating how best to be more equitable and inclusive, misses the mark. More specifically, we want to highlight how the entrenched culture of patriarchal, heteronormative white supremacy undermines the work of scholars of color while also allowing white scholars to shelter behind a facade of 'good intentions.'

In his 2008 essay 'Anglo-Saxon Studies: The State of the Field?', Michael D. C. Drout laments an 'increasing marginalization of the [early English] field,' which he, building on ideas put forth by Tom Shippey, attributes to the poor pedagogy of elite men at elite universities (Drout, 2008). According to Drout, students learned to hate Old English under these teachers, and 'When that generation got into power, they dismantled as much as they could, putting the resources towards things they cared about' (Drout, 2008). Drout's critique highlights the shortcomings of many 'state of the field' pieces in that it addresses marginalization, institutional power dynamics, and bad pedagogy, but all through a framework of assumed whiteness and masculinity. He decries 'the perception that Anglo-Saxon studies is male, white, Christian and warrior-focused,' and 'the history of pan-Germanic nationalism and its connection to philology and medieval studies' (Drout, 2008). However, though this reflection on the field acknowledges that the masculinist and white supremacist core of medieval studies has created an image problem, the critique stops there.

In this assessment, the violence that shadows the medieval, in particular the 'Anglo-Saxon,' is a cosmetic issue which must be circumvented, though not dismantled, in order to access the financial and professional resources available through the university. In turn, these resources will be used, not to gut the field's toxic history, but rather to reinvigorate and maintain the status quo, including its capitalist, misogynistic, and racist foundations. Instead of addressing the problem of white supremacy that serves as the historical bedrock for this discipline or dismantling current systemic oppressions promoted and perpetuated within our own field, such critiques simply rebrand medieval studies in a way that obscures, redirects, and offers a more palatable marketability. Consequently, the field can gesture toward a desire to change, without sacrificing the benefits and privileges that white supremacy culture facilitates.

More recently, in *Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy*, edited by Daniel C. Remein and Erica Weaver, early English scholars sought to redress the inequity in early English scholarship (characterized by the long history of positivist scholarship in publications on *Beowulf*) by offering feminist – ultimately, white

feminist – readings of the poem. The volume acknowledges that there is an underlying ‘system of social codes and obligations’ that influences how we engage with the poem, and that these readings in turn determine the orientation of medieval studies as a whole (Remein and Weaver, 2019, 3). Nevertheless, the volume cultivates the very systemic, racist violence it attempts to combat. While reflecting on the ‘field’s historical intimacy with misogynistic and racist ideology,’ and medieval studies’ ‘ongoing complicities in structural racism,’ the editors concede that *Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy* only includes the work of white scholars (Remein and Weaver, 2019, 12). They write, ‘Within this very volume for instance, we notice that not a single person of colour appears among our contributors. We thus note the ways in which intimacy can – regardless of intentions – reproduce forms of exclusion’ (Remein and Weaver, 2019, 12). Crucially, the editors’ choice to acknowledge but not correct the exclusion of scholars of color does not merely reflect white supremacy. Instead, the choice to feature only white scholars actively upholds white supremacy and allows white scholars to continue to benefit from the systemic racism long present in our field. Such erasure of scholars of color has been the modus operandi within the medievalist community for more than a century.⁶

Intimacy is a choice marked by the intentions of its participants. Following the public critique on social media of *Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy* for not pursuing contributions from medievalists of color, Remein and Weaver issued a response in which they conceded ‘the need to do more to respond to and include the work of BIPOC scholars in early medieval studies. There is a long history of scholars of color being minimized or overlooked, and it was our responsibility to push against that.’⁷ As a field, it is time for white scholars, particularly those scholars in positions of authority and privilege, to do more than retroactively acknowledge a responsibility that should have, long ago, manifested into an action. The exclusion of scholars of color from that particular volume also further illustrates the systemic ways in which academia centers white voices. Upon the volume’s release, Manchester University Press tweeted praise for the collection, stating that it ‘Features essays from some of the most prominent figures in the field.’⁸ After the criticism of the book on social media concerning their lack of BIPOC scholarly contributions, Manchester University Press retweeted the editors’ acknowledgement, adding to it a statement of support which read ‘We support our volume editors and contributors and their scholarly integrity and stand by the integrity of the peer review process.’⁹ To be certain, the volume contains a number of valuable contributions from scholars doing innovative and necessary work. Nevertheless, both statements from the press remind us how academia creates a closed-circuit loop that circulates primarily white voices. If the organizers of a given publication or panel are predominantly white, and they solicit the work of predominantly white contributors, and the work is read by reviewers who are also predominantly white, then we cannot expect any meaningful change to take place. Furthermore, the above cases imply

6 For discussion of the exclusion of Black and Brown scholars from the field (particularly the early English period) see Erik Wade (2020, especially pp. 25–6) and Mary Rambaran-Olm (forthcoming).

7 The editors’ statement of apology itself is undated and only attached to a tweet thread from the publisher (Manchester Uni Press, 2020).

8 This statement is from the press’s tweet upon the release of *Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy* (Manchester Uni Press, 2019).

9 See Manchester Uni Press (2019).

that ‘the most prominent voices in the field,’ those capable of pushing medieval studies further intellectually and ethically, are white voices, and that intellectual growth is inconsistent with the inclusion of scholars of color.

In the above cases, scholars make appeals to progressive notions of inclusion and diversity, but notably these appeals are primarily aimed toward concerns with the field’s image within the university and the kinds of marketable scholarship produced through ‘diverse approaches’ to ‘diverse texts.’ Thus, even critical reflections on the state of the field are more concerned with the abstract and the immaterial than with the experiences and bodies systematically evicted from academic spaces. It is crucial to remember that ‘the state of the field’ is more than the field’s reputation or earning potential. Real bodies, real lives, are at stake. Responding to Drout’s claim that philology is valuable specifically because it is not ‘contingent and situated in any meaningful sense,’ and therefore is an apolitical, neutral discipline (Drout, 2008), Eileen Joy writes, ‘language is situated – first and foremost in human bodies, which are themselves always situated somewhere, and I will say here that that “somewhere” is history itself, and more largely, the material world within which everything is, on some level, interconnected’ (Joy, 2008). Similarly, Ellard writes that ‘Critical theory [...] fails to render “Anglo-Saxon” studies postcolonial because it does not approach closely enough the secret sites of imperialist and racist ideologies: the often unthought, emotional positions that lie at the heart of scholarly attachment’ (Ellard, 2019, 27). Ellard reminds us to reflect on what it is we are attached to in this field, and to be mindful of the fact that ‘theory,’ no matter how well-intentioned, can in fact replicate the violence it seeks to critique, particularly when our theoretical readings are rooted in an uncritical white feminism. In the end, we cannot be more concerned with the theories of feminism and inclusion than with their practice. We cannot be more concerned with the state of the field – that is, the reputation and productivity of the field – than with the stakes of the field, especially for those Black and Indigenous scholars who are, more often than not, the most under-resourced and under-represented.

When we talk about the stakes of the field, about revolt and the revolting, we take a stance on who our work advocates for as well as on what structures and ideologies we intend to agitate through our scholarship. Throughout this volume, our contributors’ analyses of medieval texts and their narrations of their own experiences in the field demonstrate that the work we do in academia is not an abstract intellectual exercise. How we engage the past has a palpable (and often dramatic) effect on the lived experiences of our colleagues as well as on the wider communities we inhabit. When we talk about the stakes of the field, we must ask ourselves not only what do we care about, but also *who* do we care about? *Who is this field for?*

Following this troubling genealogy of the *state* of medieval studies, the stakes of the field’s survival are high. Responding to these stakes, the strength of this issue comes from the fearlessness of our contributors. This issue addresses topics

ranging from the biopolitics of sovereignty in *Beowulf* to a medieval transgender canon to eighteenth-century visions of a Gothic Middle Ages. Threading through the essays is a confrontation with a sterilizing canonicity and the power that comes with leaning *into* the revolting presence ascribed to ideas, work, and scholars that threaten to pollute antiseptic visions of the past. Our contributors challenge not only what questions scholars should ask of the medieval past, but whose voices we hear when we listen. As Blake Gutt pointedly asks in his essay, ‘whose face do we see, and whose voice do we hear’ when we read medieval texts? Issues of visibility and erasure are urgent concerns that go well beyond performances of inclusion that so often represent the first and final efforts of institutional diversity, as Sara Ahmed has shown (Ahmed, 2012). Inclusion matters not because it increases the productivity of an institution, but because the faces and voices that we acknowledge in our readings of texts manifests in the faces and voices that we acknowledge in our individual and communal realities. In other words, the *face and voice* are more than an abstract visualization, an opinion that is confined within the imagination of the reader. Which faces and voices we acknowledge in our readings affects policies that determine who is granted safety, who is protected, who is given housing, healthcare, freedom of movement, asylum, or education, among other resources. When the voices of history are presumed to be – and are upheld as – white, whiteness masquerades as the default identity around which all other bodies and experiences are organized.

As the essays in this volume attest, scholars in medieval studies have to do more than acknowledge that whiteness is centered in our field; we must actively work to decenter whiteness. Collectively, this volume suggests that this work begins by disrupting the narrative of biological, patriarchal ‘lineage’ that scholars historically imagine connects the past and the present. Historically, this lineage has acted as an organizing presence in our field, shaping discourses of the medieval and medievalism around normative ideas of embodiment, which is the presumed white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, economically stable, often Christian, male subject.

Our volume falls into two clusters and we were able to link the papers together through theme and intervention. While we have not segregated the essays into distinct parts, the first half takes on questions of white supremacy, race, and identity. The latter half offers pedagogical approaches, experimental essays, and personal narratives to challenge assumptions of how medieval studies specifically and academia more broadly operate and press readers to confront the requirements of such affiliations. Essays that fall in the middle are doing a bit of both.

The volume opens with a question raised by Wan-Chuan Kao, who asks, ‘what is the medievalism practiced by, and which in turn shapes, the racist machine of violence?’ Kao’s essay takes on how American identity, which is rooted in notions of biological whiteness – more specifically, a cisgender and

heteronormative male whiteness – has historically been the organizing principle of the medieval literary and historical canon. By exploring the medieval entanglements appropriated by the ethnonational group ‘American Identity Movement,’ formerly ‘Identity Evropa,’ Kao shows that American identity is rooted in biological essentialism of whiteness that relies on a sanitized, whitewashed medieval past to ensure its ‘validity.’ Delineating the connection between ecofascism and racist medievalism, Kao shows that cleaning the earth is code for purging America of inhabitants who pollute the identitarian ecology by their presence.

The ‘American Identity Movement’ is ensnared within a violent, colonial context that falsely upholds the ‘Middle Ages’ as a bastion of white ethnic history. Adam Miyashiro takes up this colonial context in ‘Homeland insecurity: Biopolitics and sovereign violence in *Beowulf*,’ where he considers the settler-colonial project in *Beowulf* as a ‘biopolitics of the homeland.’ Miyashiro adapts Giorgio Agamben’s concept of a racialized ‘bare life’ to reassess territoriality and violence in *Beowulf*. The Danes’ racist violence against the Grendelkin, ‘a kind of “proto”-Indigenous people,’ is a violence of territoriality, of inclusion by way of exclusion, central to the project of Anglo-settler-colonialism. Sherif Abdelkarim similarly questions the politics – and poetics – of naturalization in a comparative project between early English and first-millennium Arabic texts. Abdelkarim explores how early English and Arabic poetry imagined ‘the experience of being a stranger in strange lands.’ He shows that hospitality, adoptive community, and protective sponsorship were perhaps just as common as, if not more important than, intertribal feuding and violence.

Coral Lumbley continues the discussion of the ‘stranger in strange lands’ in her essay on the racist and exclusionary rhetoric surrounding twelfth-century Flemish refugees in South Wales. Lumbley explores this ‘obscure piece of immigration history’ through early English historiographies, such as William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* [*Deeds of the Kings of the English*] (c. 1125). She demonstrates that these historiographies craft an early anti-refugee rhetoric, which frames Flemish refugees and Welsh colonial subjects as equally detestable in the eyes of an English colonial power. The power of Lumbley’s piece is her careful attention to the shimmer of immigration history within the early English archive that has been overtly used to uphold national whiteness in England today.¹⁰

Mining this dominant archive for a history that shimmers is continued in Erik Wade’s discussion of Bede’s *In Canticum Cantorum*. Wade elucidates the complexities of both gender and race in Bede’s commentary on the biblical *Song of Songs*, highlighting how notions of spiritual progress are wrapped up in gendered and racialized identities. He argues that revulsion is a reading practice that marks race and that is necessary for Christian growth. However, rather than using these identities to critique limitations enacted through established models of devotional living, Bede uses them to reinforce the hierarchies already

10 The medieval past is often invoked to buoy the claims of modern politicians in the United Kingdom. In 2018, Tory Brexiteer Jacob Rees-Mogg claimed that ‘The first Eurosceptic was the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon King Alfred the Great, who defeated the Norse ‘great heathen army’ in 865’ (Kissane, 2018). In Rees-Mogg’s view, Brexit should reproduce what he sees as ‘Anglo-Saxon’ skepticism of continental Europe, which is, effectively, racist xenophobia.

in place – hierarchies that uphold rather than dismantle institutional violence. Furthering the volume’s discussion of institutional power and violence, Elan Justice Pavlinich presents the Old English *Genesis B* as a text encoded with strategies of resistance. By embracing (rather than obscuring) the poem’s empathetic characterization of Lucifer, Pavlinich reads Lucifer as a figure struggling for autonomy in the midst of patriarchal structures designed to oppress those who remove themselves from prescribed normative boundaries. In addition to reading Lucifer as a subversive character, Pavlinich stresses how the confining, violent structures against which Lucifer rebels also reflect the patriarchal, racist, and nation-building apparatuses embedded within modern academic institutions.

Marjorie Housley turns to Miller Oberman’s translation of *The Grave*, a poem that straddles the liminal boundary of Old and early Middle English, to examine the affective ties that underpin our own modern interactions with the medieval. Commenting on the muddy temporality that scholars of premodern studies face when researching the past through the lens of the present, which justifies ongoing marginalization and violence, Housley asks, ‘What is it about the past that urges [some] people to cleave so urgently to [some] parts of history?’ Her question points to the ideological and material effects of attachment – historical and embodied – in the early English poem *The Grave*, to consider how affective attachments to literary-historical material have serious consequences for those pushed to the margins in academia. Turning to Achille Mbembe’s ‘necropolitics,’ Housley shows that the ‘literal necrosis of the body’ in *The Grave* challenges those living to consider whose lives, voices, and bodies are allowed remembrance.

Basil Arnould Price, too, draws on Mbembe’s work (specifically *On the Postcolony*) alongside that of K. Anthony Appiah and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to explore the racialized colonial identities in *Kjalnesinga Saga*. Price’s essay remedies the paucity of scholarship on race and colonial power in medieval Iceland by focusing on the formation of racial hierarchies in the characters of Búi, the half-Irish half-Icelandic hero, and the unnamed and non-speaking *blámaðr* [Black man]. Using Spivak’s formulation ‘the subaltern cannot speak,’ Price shows that through the *blámaðr*’s silence and violent silencing, the saga renders the *blámaðr* as ‘incomprehensible.’ The modern connotation of the saga’s violence against the *blámaðr* shows that the refusal to comprehend another is embedded within white, colonial supremacy.

The next cluster of essays turns from literary bodies to the literary canon. Helen Young’s essay moves to the Enlightenment-era ‘Gothic’ turn to consider the aesthetics of ancestral politics. Extrapolating the white racist medievalism in Richard Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), Young demonstrates that the historical formation of medieval studies as a field was shaped, in part, by an ancestral discourse of white supremacy. Gatekeepers have articulated concern over being erased in discussions that would push our field forward, so

Young ensures that none in our field are forgotten. In her essay, Young allows us to recognize and confront the historiography of the field's problems. The threat of a racist canon formation envisioned by a white, cisgender-male majority is taken up by Blake Gutt in 'Transgender Mutation and the Canon: Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*.' Gutt explores the relationship between scholar, author, and text in the process of canon-formation. Showing that the canon is not neutral, Gutt shows how the cultural fantasy of white, cisgender normativity forecloses possibilities of textual mutability. He writes that 'the canon enacts a double erasure: an inward sweep, that gathers what is most legible to a supposed center, followed by an outward sifting that displaces inherent heterogeneity, rendering it invisible to the canonical lens.' As Gutt makes clear, the 'center' is never neutral, never static.

Gutt's project of reclamation – a literal 're-voicing' – of canonical voices is extended in Nick Hoffman's essay on transgender sanctity and medievalism in Juan José Barboza-Gubo and Andrew Mroczek's photography series, the *Virgenes de la Puerta*. Hoffman discusses the power of the series' reversal of the savior-saved dialectic and writes that the '*Virgenes de la Puerta* is witness to a cultural phenomenon that effectively revolutionizes the tired paradigm of medievalism: the cisgender, white man with a sword.' Hoffman's delicate meditation on trans sanctity in the *Virgenes de la Puerta* provokes and unravels this militant, masculinist, and racialized 'Middle Ages.' As Hoffman articulates, 'these saints demand to be seen, despite the risks associated with that very visibility.'

Hoffman's essay shows how visibility is a point of reclamation and empowerment, while also underscoring the violence that visibility can conjure. Heather Blatt's essay addresses the construction of whiteness in *Mandeville's Travels* within the context of color-blind racism discourses both medieval and modern. Whiteness dominates both text and scholarly tradition of *Mandeville's Travels* 'in part because whiteness in the text emerges elliptically, erased from view in its creation.' When whiteness is obscured, Blatt argues, it can be denied and ignored; and this rubric of whiteness directly and indirectly functions to maintain an 'unraced' white presence within medieval and modern textual reception.

It is precisely this violence of visibility that the final three essays unravel. Mariah Junglan Min's essay reimagines José Esteban Muñoz's concept of disidentification to underscore the 'survival strategies used by minority scholars to continue to participate in medieval studies' while understanding that the field itself has been constructed and reproduced by a white academic hegemony at the expense of minority scholars. Through Muñoz's and Zora Neale Hurston's formulations of a disidentified intimacy, Min shows that the necessity and the quandary of the minority scholar is to create distance from the object of study, 'even when the object is yourself.' From this, Min gives us a methodology, *Judas*

hermeneutics, to betray texts that ‘assume we belong’ to them fully, and to read as revolt.

In the spirit of Min’s method of disidentified reading practices, Eduardo Ramos gives a testimonial to how the racism embedded in our scholarship translates to the lived experiences of scholars of color. Ramos implores white scholars and self-proclaimed allies to consider how the expectations of scholars of color to ‘set aside their identities in order to achieve “objectivity”’ reifies whiteness as the default, neutral, ahistorical perspective. Racism in the field is not an abstract, philosophical debate on what is ethical scholarship – though it is also that; it is a decision deliberately made that has evident and injurious consequences on the lived experience of our colleagues of color. Ramos’ essay provides a guide for ethical, antiracist praxis inside and outside the walls of academia.

Our issue concludes with Sierra Lomuto’s powerful proposition that medievalists may have to become postmedieval in order to confront the dueling habits (not always distinct from each other) of our field: neoliberal diversity and white supremacy. Lomuto illustrates how the recent turn to a ‘Global Middle Ages’ is largely a response to a field that was developed as a ‘colonial racial project [. . .] that denigrated people of color as barbaric and uncivilized while *simultaneously* cementing a fantasy of European white purity.’ She cautions against such a turn to a global fantasy of a diversified medieval past that does not contend directly with the entrenchment of whiteness within the ‘medieval.’ The work of a ‘Global Middle Ages’ may be the push that the field needs, yet, as Lomuto states, this work cannot ‘bring the world centripally back to Western Europe.’ As a field, we must be willing to imagine a world otherwise.

This issue seeks to begin such an imagining. As medievalists we must ask: who does this field serve, whose history does this field excavate, and whose voices does this field mortgage and at what expense? We are reminded of Ianna Hawkins Owen’s closing statement in her essay on the abuse of the word ‘all’ in the chant ‘All Lives Matter’: ‘We can burn this shit down *and* keep each other warm; we can do both at the same time. This torch is ours to shape, to raise’ (Owens, 2014). Our contributors in this issue uphold this charge. We’re holding the flame and, collectively, we acknowledge that the rising smoke of the pyre is the beacon.

A note on pronouns

As editors of this issue, we have asked contributors to provide their pronouns in their author biographies as a step toward trans-inclusive citation practice. Sara Ahmed’s discussion of feminist citation as a disruption of white hegemonic ‘techniques of selection’ must also be a trans-inclusive practice (Ahmed, 2013). In other words, the way in which certain bodies are reproduced into or excluded

from entire scholarly disciplines is at stake in citation practice. The conversation around citing transgender scholars importantly tends to focus on naming conventions, but pronoun referent is equally important. Jonah Coman's 'Quick-And-Dirty Guideline' for trans citation practices shows how 'wrong citational practices are not just poor editorial practice, but are also building on and contributing to oppressive narratives' (Coman, 2018). We want to highlight that pronouns are stable but not static. Pronouns are not static in that they are not permanent, unchanging fixtures written in stone; rather, pronouns are stable referents that are adaptable over time at the choice of the individual referent. In other words, the pronouns that appear next to a contributor's name in this volume are stable referents attached to the time of publication. It is crucial that all scholars explore if a researcher has changed their pronouns.

This is a volume on the medieval – on the many lives that medieval narratives hold as they are read, circulated, taught, and reimagined. Though we as medievalists work with a fixed archive of documents, we remain acutely aware of the mutable nature of these documents. How and why we read – the stakes of our reading – must grow and adapt over time as we push for a field that does more just work within academia and that supports the work of justice outside the university walls. In that same spirit, we are aware that pronouns can simultaneously be a stable part of our identity, representing who we are at a given point in time, as well as a fluctuating and versatile expression of self that should not be assumed to be either static or definitive.

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We dedicate this special issue to Eileen Fradenburg Joy. We may have arrived a little late, but we're here and it's partly because you laid the groundwork for us to exist in this field. We also dedicate this to all the voices we have lost in medieval studies (particularly early medieval studies) due to racism, sexism, and bigotry. This project would never have come to fruition without Eileen Fradenburg Joy. She has given so much of her time, her voice, and her energy fighting to make room for people like me in this field, and I am eternally grateful for her mentorship and her fire. Of course, this special issue would have been impoverished without the guidance of Myra Seaman and Lara Farina, who stood behind us, prodded us, and guided us to make this the best issue we could make. Thank you both for being our pillars. I'm also grateful that I had this opportunity to work closely and build friendships with Bre and Micah; you all are good people, and I'm proud to have my name attached to this special issue with you. All praise to our fierce contributors who wrote fabulously and with passion, and thanks also to our behind-the-scenes reviewers. I'd also like to thank the people who helped push me, edit my work, and listen to me complain almost incessantly. Erik Wade, Margo Hendricks, Kim Hall, Margie Housley,

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