Editors' introduction: Medieval Forgeries / Forging the Medieval

Hannah Armstrong[a,*] **and Rebecca Menmuir**[b]

[a]Department of English and Related Literatures, University of York, York, United Kingdom.
[b]School of English and Drama, Queen Mary University of London, London, United Kingdom.

*Corresponding author.

'What if [it] is true after all?'

Fakes and forgeries capture the imagination like little else, and once embedded in the public and academic consciousness they tend to be the subject of intense and recurring debate. In the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson had already firmly quashed any notion of the epic *Ossian* being the ancient poem that its 'translator'—in fact, its author—James Macpherson had claimed it to be (Johnson and Boswell 2020, 96); but Magnus Linklater's 2021 review of John McShane's modernised edition ran with the headline, 'What if the hoax of Ossian is true after all?' (Linklater 2021). Striking a similar tone is the headline of a *New European* article from 2023: 'Is the Turin Shroud real after all?' (Totaro 2023), a question posed amidst the careful neutrality of the Catholic

Church (John Paul II 1998) and disputes raised by scientific radiocarbon dating (Damon et al. 1989). Among these appeals to reopen debates, research elsewhere has doubled down on exposed fakes: two days after Linklater's review in *The Times*, *YaleNews* published new research on the Vinland Map, a document once much-vaunted as a fifteenth-century depiction of the 'New World.' 'Analysis unlocks secret of the Vinland Map,' the headline runs, '– it's a fake' (Cummings 2021).

We can recognise a certain sensationalism in these headlines; their language is that of clickbait journalism, clamouring for the attention of media-saturated readers. But they also speak to the enduring allure of the forgery, suggesting that if a reader just turns the page, scrolls down, or pays to peek behind a paywall, they will alight on a more exciting truth than the factual banality of a debunking. With enough persistence, material and methodological innovations, and questioning of established interpretations, forgeries will reveal their secrets. Forgeries are nothing new, as Grafton (1990) and Ruthven (2001) attest of literary forgeries—as long as there have been literary critics, as long as there has been literature, there have also been literary forgeries. Wider concepts of the fake are also enduring, as witnessed in the history of conspiracy theories (Butter and Knight 2020). Nevertheless, there has undoubtedly been a recent surge of interest in the idea of the fake, not only in returning to the Turin Shroud or the Ossian fakes, but also in conspiracy theories surrounding Covid-19 (Butter and Knight 2023), in 'fake news' (Collins English Dictionary's Word of the Year in 2017), and in 'deepfakes' (a term referring to digital alterations which are often used maliciously, and which made the 2019 shortlist of Collins' Word of the Year).[1] Naturally, these topics also intersect with the academic sphere, as with the growth of 'pseudo-archaeology' (Schiele and Schiele 2022).

These news articles declaring for their preferred side of 'real' or 'fake' are predicated on and prompted by various desires, and forgery and desire have always been insuperably connected. Kenneth Lapatin argues that 'forgeries are successful […] because they satisfy a need, *or at least desire*, to believe' (2023, 34, our italics), and that desire continues even when a forgery ceases to be 'successful,' that is, when it is exposed as a fraud. There is the desire to discover the truth *once and for all*, as with the use of 'after all' in the two headlines above, and a desire to settle the debate despite the clear and opposing urge to fuel the debate further. Often there is an urge to understand the motives and intentions behind a forgery; the financial, social, or political stakes in faking something. In literary studies and literary forgery studies, we are often taught that authorial intention is unknowable. Desire subsequently becomes displaced onto the critic, who

1 Collins (2017); Collins (2019).

seeks to rescue a text from anonymity or pseudonymity in order to assimilate it into a canon.[2]

The Middle Ages were full of desires and full of forgeries, and the medieval has in turn been much-desired and much-forged in its afterlife. This meeting between forgeries produced during the Middle Ages and later forgings of the medieval is the centre of this essay cluster, along with the concomitant desires, anxieties, and complications that the tradition brings. These six essays all focus on the written word, albeit ranging from physical charters, letters, and literature to texts which primarily exist online. They are all connected in some way to the *medieval* and to a concept of *forging*, both of which are taken *lato sensu* to foster some unexpected textual encounters. They traverse archives, as well as their makers and their users; they consider the various meanings of forgery, across its positive, negative, and neutral connotations; and they examine works manifested in the absence of something lost or in the imagined and desired interstices of literature. Each essay posits that forgery is a fundamentally generative mode, and the medieval a fundamentally generative time and place.

In committing to a transhistorical and transnational approach, we inevitably face that 'principal difficulty' and 'metacritical problem' raised by K.K. Ruthven: 'is each literary forgery so culture-specific as to render cross-cultural comparisons invalid?' (2001, 59). Our aim is not to elide the differences between each instance of forging, nor between the medieval and the postmedieval (even if we were able to pinpoint with any certainty where one ended and the other began).[3] Medieval and medievalist forgeries are often embedded in deep cultural issues of personal and collective identity, nationalism, and faith, and are inevitably rooted in specific contexts. They long for a past time, place, or peoples, but they speak most firmly to their own time. Anthony Grafton imagines the forger's contemporary context as a tell-tale fingerprint:

> […] any forger, however deft, imprints the pattern and texture of his own period's life, thought and language on the past he hopes to make seem real and vivid. But the very details he deploys, however deeply they impress his immediate public, will eventually make his trickery stand out in bold relief, when they are observed by later readers who will recognize the forger's period superimposed on the forgery's. (1990, 67)

As well as reflecting society, forgeries are embedded into the very fabric of the culture in which they are produced, with Ruthven arguing that forgeries are not irregular phenomena but rather texts built into the history and production of culture (2001, 1–4).[4] Forgeries are even, to some scholars, a generative energy within society: Levi Roach, for instance, considers forgeries as 'capable of shaping social and political realities'

2 For a brief history of scholarship and theoretical thought concerning anonymity and pseudonymity, see Griffin (2019).

3 On the chronological boundaries of the Middle Ages, see especially Summit and Wallace (2007); Matthews (2015, 45–64); Orlemanski (2023).

4 Ruthven here argues that we cannot see literature and literary forgeries as binary opposites. Instead, 'literary forgery is not so much the disreputable Other of "genuine" literature as its demystified and disreputable Self' (2001, 3).

(2021, 15). In their afterlives, forgeries continue reflecting and influencing culture, being reforged anew to mean something different to each successive audience. Many of the essays in this cluster, therefore, turn to *re*forging as a productive idea, reflecting the fluid reception of forgeries across time and cultures.

To answer Ruthven's question, literary forgeries *are* culture-specific to the extreme, at the point of production and at each successive point of reception—but by no means does this render cross-cultural comparisons invalid. Medieval and medievalist writers adopt their individual paradigms of forging for their individual situations, but in the cumulative effect a sense of *medieval forgery* takes shape, a sense which we seek to illuminate and contribute to in this cluster. Each iteration of forging here does something slightly different, and in each case what it means *to forge* takes on a new meaning. The beauty of such a capacious term, as we now discuss, is that every new iteration of forging, with every different impulse or desire or need behind each forgery, itself reshapes—reforges—what we understand as a forgery.

Forgery and the *medieval*

Defining either of the key terms in our cluster—*forgery* and the *medieval*—is not straightforward, and indeed it is precisely the shifting nature of both ideas that forms the conceptual core of this cluster. In English, *to forge* (*OED*, s.v. 'forge,' v.1) is borrowed from the Old French *forgier*, itself derived from the Latin *fabricare* (*to fabricate*, a term which, like forgery, also evokes fictitiousness: *OED*, s.v. 'fabricate,' v.).[5] Since its emergence in English in the late-fourteenth century, *forging* has been yoked to both *making* in a neutral sense and being deceitful in that making. A blacksmith at a forge *forges*, fashioning an object out of metal.[6] God, the ultimate Maker, is a 'forgere of alle thingus' in Wyclif's translation of *Ecclesiastes* 11:5, where 'forgere' translates *fabricare*; a later version changes this to 'makeris of thingus.'[7] Geoffrey Chaucer's Parson in *The Canterbury Tales* similarly describes forging in a furnace, but even here forging is turned to wickedness: 'In this forseyde develes fourneys ther forgen three shrews' ('In this aforesaid devil's furnace there forge three wicked people'), namely Pride, Envy, and Insolence (Chaucer 2008, 10.554, 305). Later in his tale, the Parson associates *forging* with the pleasure of deliberately lying, condemning:

> lesynges, which generally is fals signyficaunce of word, in entente to deceyven his evene-Christene […] Another lesynge comth of delit for to lye, in which delit they wol forge a long tale and peynten it with

5 On (the problem of) defining the term *forgery*, see Metzger (1972); Ruthven (2001, 34–62); Berkhofer (2022, 16–22); Peirano Garrison (2023).

6 As in the late-fourteenth-century poem *Cleanness*: 'Wen hit watz fettled and forged and to þe fulle grayþed' ('When it was prepared and constructed and fully made ready') (Anonymous 2002, l. 343, 125). Even *fashioning* has the (now-obsolete) meaning of 'to counterfeit, pervert' (*OED*, s.v. 'fashion,' v., 4b).

7 As noted by Berkhofer (2022, 287 n. 1).

alle circumstaunces, where al the ground of the tale is fals. (Chaucer 2008, 10.608, 10.610, 308)

[lies, which generally is a false significance of a word, with the intent of deceiving one's fellow Christian […] Another lie comes from the delight of lying, in which delight they will forge a long tale and furnish it with all the details, where all the ground of the tale is false.]

One goes about producing a false significance (that is, a lie) by *forging*, and especially pertinent is the delight of the storyteller in doing so. The Parson, himself fabricated by his maker (Chaucer), criticises lies with all the sincerity he can muster, but these words can also be read as describing, in relatively neutral terms, the act of the literary author, whose deceit we do not condemn in the same way as we do the unauthorised fiction of a forgery.

Forging as *making* which slips into deceit therefore goes back to the earliest conceptions of forgeries in English, connections which were to remain throughout its linguistic history. This is not unique to the verb *to forge*. David Greene has observed the 'general semantic tendency for any verb meaning "make" to move into the field of "make up," which can mean "to embellish" or "to concoct with intent to deceive"' (1975, 4)— such as *to fabricate*, as noted above. Moreover, the neutral and negative senses of *forging* are accompanied by a later, more positive sense, in a resolute vessel or an innovative method which *forges ahead* in its course (*OED*, s.v. 'forge', v.2).

The essays in this cluster engage with the breadth of possible semantic meanings for *forge* and its derivative noun *forgery*. In literary studies, a *forgery* has settled in its meaning as a document or piece of literature created with the intention of deceiving, a sense which governs the first essay in this cluster, for example.[8] Other essays develop their understanding of *forging* in different ways, linking forging to a particularly creative type of making (as the dialogue essay does) and forgery as a mode for creating and expressing. Thus, while we attempt to get closer to understanding what a *medieval forgery* is, we do so by encouraging an expansion of what we are currently willing to accommodate by the terms *forging* and *forgery*.

Matters are complicated by the host of other terms orbiting around the noun *forgery*. Those reading about literary forgeries are highly likely to encounter the words *fake*, *imposture*, *hoax*, *apocrypha*, *pseudepigrapha*, *counterfeit*, or *spurious*, all of which demand a fluid rather than prescriptive relationship with *forgery*.[9] As well as multiplying in meaning in reference only to itself, the boundaries of a forgery shift in accordance with its relation to these assorted terms. A *forgery* intends to deceive where a *pseudepigraphon* does not (Metzger 1972). A *forgery* is a serious

8 For forgery in this definition, see Speyer (1971); Metzger (1972).

9 See further Ruthven (2001, 34–62). On forgery's antonyms, Nick Groom asks: 'can forgery be defined without a debilitating recourse to words like real, true, or authentic?' (2002, 55).

offence where a *hoax* can be amusing (Ruthven 2001, 35). A *counterfeit* now commonly refers to forgery in a legal sense, in counterfeiting currency (as in the UK Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981), where *forgery* alone can refer to the literary or the economic. Defining one will inevitably draw another into its definition, as we have done with defining a *counterfeit* as a subsection of *forgery*. Across a wide array of disciplines, scholars have attempted to categorise, to define, to delimit, and otherwise to set boundaries to a whole host of terms which seem to delight in sabotaging said boundaries, and each 'final' lexicography of terms is unseated by a competing scholarly hierarchy which suits another era or artefact.

The complications generated by the superfluity of language surrounding forgeries necessitates flexibility rather than prescriptivism. There is no neutral term to describe forgery, and no other term which we can fix against forgery to define it any further. This is part of the allure and the beauty of forgeries, which evade definition the more we try to pin them down. Therefore, rather than defining *forgery* against any of these other terms, the essays in this cluster collectively define *forgery* against *forgery*, with one instance of forging adding to the meaning ascribed by another instance.

'A continuous return': The *medieval*

What, then, do we mean by *medieval*, and moreover why have we chosen whatever the *medieval* is as the nexus of our cluster?[10] *Forgery* and *medieval* are, we argue, natural bedfellows. This is the case for forgeries produced during the Middle Ages, which saw a 'Golden Age' of forgeries. It also holds for those works which set out to capture the *medieval* in some way, wherein it is precisely in the indefinability of the *medieval*, or at least the inability to contain it within meaningful borders, that the similarly nebulous *forgery* is most generative. In this section we discuss the relationship between the Middle Ages and forgeries, and attempts throughout the ages to define—and forge—the *medieval*.

While the verb *to forge* emerges in the English vernacular in the late-fourteenth century, forging and forgeries permeate the entirety of the Middle Ages. Duplicitous documents proliferated, as scholars such as Giles Constable (1983), Alfred Hiatt (2004), and Roach (2021) have noted. Robert F. Berkhofer III (2022) has recently traced the microhistories of three forgeries across England, France, and Flanders which exemplify the culture of forgeries in the tenth and eleventh centuries particularly. Historical documents, such as charters, are for the most part writings with perceivable intentions: for instance, a charter granting land in perpetuity is concocted for the benefit of a monastic community. In the

10 The quotation in the title of this section is taken from Eco (1986, 65). On the terms *medieval* and *Middle Ages*, see Robinson (1984).

realm of literature, forgeries circulated with less certain purposes (and given the uncertainty of intention, are more commonly referred to as *pseudepigrapha*). The classical *auctors* saw their canon multiply exponentially: Virgil in the late-antique collection of presumed *juvenilia* now known as the *Appendix Vergiliana*, Ovid in the medieval assortment of pseudo-Ovidiana ranging across his erotic, mythographic, and exilic output, and it was widely understood that Cicero was the author of the extremely popular *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, now deemed anonymous. The second essay in this cluster treating letters falsely attributed to Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 attests to the prevalence of medieval forgeries beyond Western Europe. Medieval literary culture inherited some of these spurious works and created many more of its own.

The types of inauthentic works we have just described speak to a facet of medieval culture which allowed for forgeries (or what we might now call forgeries) to thrive: namely, the practice of *imitatio*. Like the Romans before them, medieval schoolboys learnt, and medieval schoolmasters taught, by imitation, or *imitatio* (Ziolkowski 2001; Peirano 2012, 24). As a culture intellectually reared on imitation, the medieval immediately problematises any affirmation that a forgery must intend to deceive. A neutral schoolroom exercise carried out *in propria persona*, or the scholastic tendency to rephrase texts with the gloss *quasi diceret* ('as if to say'), becomes a forgery to new and decontextualised audiences. Those schoolboys who grew up used to practicing *imitatio* were, as Irene Peirano states of Roman schoolboys, part of a culture with a 'shared interest in treating authors and their texts as stretchable containers' (2012, 24).

This is not to say that medieval writers had no concept of intellectual property or literary theft, although legal frameworks for forging and counterfeiting were not to develop for several centuries.[11] As the Middle Ages progressed, so too did an awareness of forgeries, as well as the desire to identify them and implement structures which could identify them. The most well-known example is the unmasking of the Donation of Constantine as a forgery, especially by the humanist Lorenzo Valla in the fifteenth century, heralding more systematic modes of philological analysis, amongst other methods, for identifying forgeries. Earlier, Petrarch had expressed his own disgust for works masquerading as his own, and also for other forgeries when he saw them. So he complains in a letter to one Lelius in 1362–1363:

> You write that recently you have seen a number of short works, some in the vernacular too, bearing my name. You sent me the opening lines as well as enough lines of each for me to discern whether they were mine or another's. I laud your diligence, but marvel at your uncertainty. For when I glanced at them, I not only realized at once

11 On the development of copyright in relation to literary forgeries, see Groom (2002, 74–84).

that they were not mine, but grieved and blushed, astonished that others could think them mine or that they caused you any doubt. Therefore, the people attributing them to me are doubly in the wrong: they rob their author of his work and burden me with what is not mine. (Petrarch 1992, 65)

Petrarch's frustration is not new: in the second century CE, the physician and writer Galen protested upon seeing works with his name on them which he had not written, and the Augustan poet Horace famously alluded to the dangers of borrowing another bird's feathers, referring to literary plagiarism.[12] But Petrarch is indicative of those voices which articulated an understanding of forging as literary theft, either despite or because of its popularity in the Middle Ages. These examples already cross the tendentious boundary between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, perhaps proving Grafton's assessment that literary forgers breed critics who detect forgeries ('it takes a forger to expose a fake,' 1990, 123), and in response to increased interest in forgeries there arose yet more forgeries. Ruthven extends this circular thesis to hackers in the 1990s, who '[improve] one another's performances until they become superstars' (2001, 52), something we may witness today in the race between AI-generated plagiarism and the anti-plagiarism AI which detects but also trains further plagiarism software.

We see continuous returns to the Middle Ages in its long *nachleben*. Indeed, Umberto Eco famously wrote: 'Modern ages have revisited the Middle Ages from the moment when, according to historical handbooks, they came to an end' (1986, 65). There is, it appears, something about the medieval which invites *forging* in all its guises, paralleling the medieval period's inclination to forge, imitate, and fabricate. Several of these forgeries of the medieval are amongst the best-known and most provocative iterations of forgeries: Thomas Chatterton's eighteenth-century invention of his medieval monk Thomas Rowley; Edward William's eighteenth-century invention of the medieval Iolo Morganwg; Rudyard Kipling's forgery of a Chaucer manuscript embedded in his short story *Dayspring Mishandled*; and the twentieth-century Vinland map.

This continuous return is compulsive and laced with the promise of uncovering some semblance of authenticity or truthfulness (see above the headlines in *The Times* and *The New European*). Today the Middle Ages are invoked for a broad range of political and ethical positions, often seemingly conflicting ones, but that stamp of 'medievalness' acts as much as a seal of authenticity and authority as any embossed wax on a medieval charter. Take, for instance, an article in *The Telegraph* written by David Frost—the UK's former chief Brexit negotiator—in the run up to the coronation of Charles III in May 2023. The headline reads 'Britain's

12 Galen even wrote a book distinguishing his genuine works from forgeries, as described in Grafton (1990, 19). Horace warns against borrowing feathers in his *Epistle* 1.3, albeit himself borrowing the metaphor from Aesop: see Bjørnstad (2008, 10–12).

institutions are medieval – and it's a good thing too' (Frost 2023). The Middle Ages invoked by Frost's article is one of continuity, one in which England's borders have remained relatively unchanged and its constitution intact.[13] It matters, Frost writes, 'that we live in an old country because it means that our ceremonies are not simple flummery, as some claim, but have real symbolic meaning.' What *real symbolic meaning* is, or indeed what *fake* symbolic meaning might be, is not clarified.

Although Frost repeatedly tells us that 'it matters' that the UK is 'medieval,' it is never made apparent why it matters. The closest the article comes to articulating the benefits of the medieval is its statement in the penultimate paragraph that: 'This ancient system still works well. The same can't be said of the recent bolt-ons to it: […] Tony Blair's Supreme Court; […] and of course the unhappy experiment of EU membership.' Here it becomes apparent that this is the medieval as 'pretext.'[14] It is a Middle Ages that upholds the opinions and beliefs its creator already espouses, namely here a conservatism which is wary of legal and political reform, and which is every bit as forged as a monastic medieval charter. It is forged both in the sense that is has been deliberately crafted and created, but also in the sense that it is happy to overlook those historical details which would be detrimental to the version of history most useful to its creator. It is a Middle Ages that has been forged to shape opinion, and which hopes to be accepted as truth.

Such gestures to the medieval as a justification for contemporary perspectives or actions are not uncommon. Many traditions, practices, and local legends are described, often loosely and without further elaboration on interpretation boards or in tourist leaflets, as 'going back' to the Middle Ages.[15] These medieval roots are apparently more powerful and compelling than an early modern or, say, Victorian origin because, as Gwendolyn Morgan puts it, 'Medievalism is inextricably bound up with authority' (2014, 27). Morgan argues that:

> The adaptation of, or appeal to, medieval tropes, whether philo-sophical, political, artistic, or popular, frequently serves as an *auctoritee*, an unassailable justification for the ideology and practices of the culture making the appeal. Such practice is, of course, itself an adaptation (conscious or otherwise) of the medieval appeal to ancient authority and hence a double practice of medievalism. (2014, 27)

This *auctoritee* makes the medieval a fertile space for artists, writers, and politicians to appeal back to, as we shall see throughout this essay cluster. But as Morgan notes, this appeal to the past is itself a mimicking of the medieval, 'a double practice,' and one which highlights the parallels or rhymes which we might find between medieval approaches to forgery and the way in which modern actors have forged their own Middle Ages.

13 On the belief in Britain's cultural and institutional continuity from the Middle Ages to the present day, see Utz (2016, 122).

14 One of Eco's 'Ten Little Middle Ages' (1986, 68).

15 For more on the relationship between medievalism and metaphors of space and motion, see Trigg (2016).

The reason that we look back to the medieval rather than any other time period is, Eco famously claimed, because in doing so we are 'looking at our infancy […] Our return to the Middle Ages is a quest for our roots' (1986, 65). These roots are strong enough that they can be used to justify and maintain the formation of states. We have already seen this in the case of the UK, where medieval precedent provides rationalisation for the continuation of inheritable state powers. Or note the case of eighteenth-century Denmark, which used the existence of (then extinct) medieval Scandinavian colonies in Greenland to provide precedent for the island's colonisation (Rix 2023).[16] Yet, as has been powerfully argued by Andrew B.R. Elliott when outlining his theory of 'banal medievalism,' the Middle Ages in contemporary popular culture is 'generated not by looking backwards into the past but by looking sideways' (2017, 4). It is this process of 'looking sideways' at other contemporary iterations of the medieval, whether by a thirteenth-century scribe or a twentieth-century poet, which leads to Grafton's fingerprint of forgery. Both can only work with the 'pattern and texture' (Grafton 1990, 67) of their own period and life, and such a framing raises crucial questions for this cluster about what separates the medieval forgery from the postmedieval forging of the Middle Ages. Is it, as Pam Clements has suggested, that the '*inauthenticity* of medievalism begins, then, at whatever point the Middle Ages is said to have ended' (2014, 20)?

The constructed nature of the medieval has long been a focus point for medievalism as a discipline, with Eco cautioning that 'every time one speaks of a dream of the Middle Ages, one should first ask which Middle Ages one is dreaming of' (1986, 68). Norman Cantor's *Inventing the Middle Ages* (1991) served to underline the role of academics in this construction of an apparently discrete time period, a period which Leslie Workman—often styled as the progenitor of medievalism studies—described as being 'virtually unique among major periods or areas of historical study in being entirely the creation of scholars' (1995, 227). Once we acknowledge the artifice of the medieval as a discrete unit of culture and time, the clear demarcations which separate the medieval textual forger from the twenty-first century writer dreaming of the Middle Ages begin to blur. Both use texts and a reimagining of the past to shape their own social and political realities, to paraphrase Roach (2021, 15), in some form. To reiterate, we do not seek in this cluster to elide all difference between the output of such figures, but rather to open a space in which the generative potential of an encounter between such seemingly disparate works can be examined.

16 On the colonisation of Kalaallit Nunaat (known in English as Greenland), see Rud (2017).

About this cluster

The six essays comprising this cluster progress in a broadly chronological manner, with each proposing a different approach to understanding our central concept of *medieval forgery*. Each essay complements and complicates the definitions of the essays before and after them; collectively, they argue for a flexible and transhistorical approach towards what we mean by *medieval*, what we mean by *to forge* and *forgery*, and especially what we mean by *medieval forgery*.

Our volume begins in the heart of twelfth-century London. Jennie M. England's essay centres around Westminster Abbey (an 'archetypal example of English monastic forgery' from the period, as England notes), and in the texts produced by the forger and hagiographer Osbert of Clare. The forged charter discussed by England is a forgery in the traditionally defined sense, as a text intended to deceive. Yet even here, the waters are muddied by Osbert's parallel activities composing hagiographies, a genre with its own complex relationship with truth, and its own mechanisms for the slippage between fact and fiction. Moreover, we find in Osbert's charter a *medieval forgery*, in the sense that it is a forgery that was produced in the Middle Ages *and* a forgery of the medieval, since Osbert attempts to capture a medieval past (albeit one not long passed from living memory). England's essay prompts questions on what the purpose of a forgery is—for its creator, its immediate audience, and its audience through its afterlife—as well as how generic distinctions shift how much deceit, or how much fiction, audiences are willing to permit in literary and historical texts.

We remain in the Middle Ages but move to medieval Japan in the following essay by Watanabe Yumiko, translated from Japanese into English by Eric Esteban. The *Maigetsushō* attributed to Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 has not been universally accepted as a forgery, and Watanabe provides substantial evidence arguing that the text was not composed by Teika, contrary to the lingering attribution. Watanabe contributes to the conversation on the importance of form and genre when considering medieval forgeries. The *Maigetsushō* is composed as epistles, a form greatly affecting the execution and reception of a forgery. Letters have embedded audiences and addressees—as, perhaps, do all texts, but letters inscribe an addressee in their generic makeup. Every letter therefore implicates its audience before it has even been read, circulated, or responded to. What does it mean for the audience, then, when the letter at hand is a fake? Relatedly, perhaps the most curious and compelling feature of the forgery-epistle examined by Watanabe is its exhortation *not* to be read, to instead be hidden from any audience beyond its immediate

addressee. The forgery which begs to be concealed runs against psycho-analytical readings of forgeries throughout the ages, of texts which want to be found out, sometimes even embedding clues for those readers clever enough to share in the deception.[17]

17 See, for instance, Peirano's discussion of the paradox of 'fakes that flaunt, rather than hide, their own derivativeness' (2012, 25), and Andrew B.R. Elliott's response essay in this collection.

Mary Boyle explores nineteenth-century editions, adaptations, and translations of the thirteenth-century epic *Kudrun* through the medium of *postmedieval*'s 'Terms of art' essay (Jagot, Orlemanski, and Ritchey 2021, 8). The 'term of art' at hand is, naturally, *forgery*, and Boyle considers how useful a term it is in the specific contexts of Anglo-German nineteenth-century medievalism. The typical links between forgery and intention, whether knowable or unknowable, is extended from its current focus on the intention of the medieval author to the intentions of the postmedieval editor, translator, and adapter. While the core term here is *forgery*, throughout Boyle's essay we are struck by the related and equal difficulty of pinning down *authenticity*. For instance, what is more authentic: the edition which smooths over perceived errors to service a contemporary audience? The edition which presents the text, 'warts and all'? Or the edition which seeks to recover an 'original' text, even if that means fabricating a plausible reconstruction? Boyle uses the term *forgery* to navigate through these knotty questions.

Francesca Brooks and E.K. Myerson take on another of *postmedieval*'s essay types in the form of a 'dialogue' (Jagot, Orlemanski, and Ritchey 2021, 8), bringing together the work of Edwin Morgan and Derek Jarman to ask how the medieval is forged in the context of the archive and in queer engagements with the medieval. Both artists made a Middle Ages for their times, and in this dialogue forging is a particularly creative act, encompassing scrapbooking, collaging, translating, and visual media. Here, the medieval is shaped by Morgan and Jarman's identities as queer artists and their responses to the queerphobic norms and politics of their contemporary times. In this dialogue, we find examples of how our ideas of the medieval can be made, but also how new ways of being can be imagined and forged using the medieval as the base metal. The dialogue also acts as a pivot point for the cluster, directing our focus to the role of the archive in forging and reifying meaning. How is the archive constructed—with what parameters, what resources, and to what end?—and how is it maintained, and even itself reconstructed and reforged for new audiences?

The final two essays take us to the digital sphere. Elizabeth Biggs explores the aftermath of the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI) in 1922, which saw the loss of thousands of miles of shelf space containing records relating to medieval Irish history. Forgery is always a response to absence, whether imagined or real, and Biggs describes how records held in other collections have been used in an attempt to reconstruct and supplement the destroyed PROI archive. Forging once again intersects with history and historiography, as in

England's essay, and while the two contexts are separated by nine hundred years and the Irish Sea, their texts are both prompted by the need to shape a national heritage and narrative. Through her activities with the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland, Biggs is herself one of the forgers of Ireland's medieval past (in a much more transparent manner, we hasten to add, than medieval examples such as Osbert of Clare), identifying the British copies of colonial records once held at the PROI and making them available through a new online archive. New technologies are pushing the frontiers of forgery and we are accustomed to conceptualising these as malicious; for example, in the emerging dangers of AI in aiding plagiarism or in assisting the art forger. In contrast, Biggs' essay reminds us of the exciting possibilities and emerging methods for forging new archives and new ways of knowing the Middle Ages.

Finally, Fran Allfrey, Lucy Moore, and Richard Nevell turn to highly public-facing forgings of the medieval in their reflections on the role of Wikipedia as a (web)site where our understanding of the medieval is shaped, and, with every new edit, constantly reshaped. In their roles as medievalists and Wikipedia editors, they argue that Wikipedia has the potential to generate a positive type of forging. They also examine the methodology and impact of editorial choices, as demonstrated on Wikipedia pages relating to the medieval, such as the 'Black Death' page. These choices are bound up, as many aspects of the medieval now are, with issues of representation and marginalisation, appropriation and exclusion. Despite this essay's solely digital contexts, one is struck by the similarities between the fashioning of knowledge on Wikipedia and in the encyclopaedias produced during the age of medieval scholasticism.[18] The essay also foregrounds the processes and mechanisms behind the production of knowledge with the intention of forming (and forging) history, an integral feature of every text and every context described in these essays. Here, in the last essay of the cluster, we are simultaneously held in the medieval past, its postmedieval iterations, and in the constant shaping and reshaping of the medieval stretching from the present into the future.

Our cluster concludes with a response essay by Andrew B.R. Elliott. In his consideration of the discussions around the restoration of Notre Dame Cathedral, Elliott brings us back to the very origins of this cluster at the *Medieval Forgeries / Forging the Medieval* workshop, held at the Museum of London's now defunct Barbican location. Both institutions are currently undergoing a reimagining of what they represent and how they convey the past to the public. As Elliott notes, whilst there has been great political willpower to restore Notre Dame, truly rebuilding it—let alone 'even more beautifully' as President Macron pledged—is already an impossibility. There is also, Elliott highlights, the question of which version of the 'multiple temporalities of Notre Dame' its restorers should be emulating;

18 See Franklin-Brown (2012, 1–27).

throughout its long life it has already been frequently reimagined and, as hard as it is to believe now, its status as a beloved piece of architectural heritage is barely two centuries old (Pennoyer 2019). In contrast, the Museum of London is currently undergoing 'a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reconceive what a museum for London can be' (Museum of London 2023). Promising to 'explore key moments in London's history' whilst also 'unpick[ing] what we think we know to reveal new insights,' the Museum team have emphasised their wish to portray London 'in all its glory and with all its difficulties' (Museum of London 2022). During the *Medieval Forgeries / Forging the Medieval* workshop in June 2022, we were highly sensitive to the fact that the venue of the museum itself was a space in which ideas of the past are forged, and that attempts to reshape or define that past are not always uncontroversial.[19] Although our cluster has focused on textual forging and forgeries, Elliott's response reminds us that the questions and concerns they prompt are not limited to the page, but rather encompass the very archives and museums they are stored in, the university classrooms in which they are interpreted, and the public spaces in which they are displayed. The success of the revitalised iterations of Notre Dame and the Museum of London will ultimately rest on whether the public deem these new forgings of the past to be 'true after all.'

19 See, for instance, a *BBC News* article on the removal of the statue of the slave trader Robert Milligan from outside the Museum of London's Docklands site (BBC News 2020).

Acknowledgements

About the Authors

Hannah Armstrong is a PhD researcher at the University of York. Her thesis explores the reception and translation of Old Norse literature since the nineteenth century, with a particular focus on ecocritical readings and the islands of the North Atlantic. Contact e-mail: hannah.armstrong@york.ac.uk

Rebecca Menmuir is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at Queen Mary University of London. Her postdoctoral research project explores forgeries and pseudepigrapha of Ovid in and around the Middle Ages. Contact e-mail: r.menmuir@qmul.ac.uk

References

Anonymous. 2002. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, edited by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

BBC News. 2020. 'Robert Milligan: Slave trader statue removed from outside London museum.' *BBC News*, June 9, 2020. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-52977088.

Berkhofer, Robert F. III. 2022. *Forgeries and Historical Writing in England, France, and Flanders, 900–1200*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press.

Bjørnstad, Hall. 2008. 'Introduction.' In *Borrowed Feathers: Plagiarism and the Limits of Imitation in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Hall Bjørnstad, 5–17. Oslo: Unipub.

Butter, Michael, and Peter Knight, eds. 2020. *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. London: Routledge.

Butter, Michael, and Peter Knight. 2023. *Covid Conspiracy Theories in Global Perspective*. London: Routledge.

Cantor, Norman. 1991. *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. 2008. *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clements, Pam. 2014. 'Authenticity.' In *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*, edited by Elizabeth Emery and Richard Utz, 19–26. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Collins Dictionary. 2017. 'Collins 2017 Word of the Year Shortlist.' *Collins Language Lovers Blog*, November 2, 2017. https://blog.collinsdictionary.com/language-lovers/collins-2017-word-of-the-year-shortlist/.

Collins Dictionary. 2019. 'Collins Word of the Year 2019 Shortlist.' *Collins Language Lovers Blog*, November 7, 2019. https://blog.collinsdictionary.com/language-lovers/collins-word-of-the-year-2019-shortlist/.

Constable, Giles. 1983. 'Forgery and Plagiarism in the Middle Ages.' *Archiv für Diplomatik* 29: 1–41.

Cummings, Mike. 'Analysis unlocks secret of the Vinland Map – it's a fake.' *YaleNews*, September 1, 2021. https://news.yale.edu/2021/09/01/analysis-unlocks-secret-vinland-map-its-fake.

Damon, P.E., et al. 1989. 'Radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin.' *Nature* 337: 611–14.

Eco, Umberto. 1986. 'The Return of the Middle Ages.' In *Travels in Hyperreality*, 61–85. London: Picador.

Elliott, Andrew B.R. 2017. *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Franklin-Brown, Mary. 2012. *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Reading in the Scholastic Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Frost, David. 'Britain's institutions are medieval – and it's a good thing too.' *The Telegraph*, May 4, 2023. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/05/04/britains-institutions-are-medieval-and-its-a-good-thing-too/.

Grafton, Anthony. 1990. *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Greene, David. 1975. *Makers and Forgers*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Griffin, Robert J. 2019. 'Anonymity and Pseudonymity.' In *The Cambridge History of Literary Authorship*, edited by Ingo Berensmeyer, Gert Buelens, and Marysa Demoor, 341–53. Cambridge: Cambridge University of Press.

Groom, Nick. 2002. *The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature*. London: Picador.

Hiatt, Alfred. 2004. *The Making of Medieval Forgeries: False Documents in Fifteenth- Century England*. London: The British Library.

Jagot, Shazia, Julie Orlemanski, and Sara Ritchey. 2021. 'What might a journal be?' *postmedieval* 12: 5–13.

John Paul II. 'Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.' *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, May 24, 1998. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/travels/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_24051998_sindone.html.

Johnson, Samuel, and James Boswell. 2020. *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, edited by Celia Barnes and Jack Lynch. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lapatin, Kenneth, 2023. 'Prologue: Ideas of Forgery.' In *Forgery Beyond Deceit: Fabrication, Value, and the Desire for Ancient Rome*, edited by John North Hopkins and Scott McGill, 29–63. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Linklater, Magnus. 'What if the hoax of Ossian is true after all?' *The Times*, August 30, 2021. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/what-if-the-hoax-of-ossian-is-true-after-all-kctz98kjz.

Matthews, David. 2015. *Medievalism: A Critical History*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Metzger, Bruce. 1972. 'Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha.' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91: 3–24.

Morgan, Gwendolyn. 2014. 'Authority.' In *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*, edited by Elizabeth Emery and Richard Utz, 27–33. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Museum of London. 2022. 'Museum of London begins countdown to West Smithfield relocation.' *Museum of London*, February 10, 2022. https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/news-room/press-releases/museum-london-begins-countdown-west-smithfield-relocation.

Museum of London. 2023. 'A new museum for London.' *Museum of London*, 2023. https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/west-smithfield.

Orlemanski, Julie. 2023. 'What Is "Postmedieval"? Embedded Reflections.' *boundary 2* 50: 57–81.

Peirano, Irene. 2012. *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Peirano Garrison, Irene. 2023. 'Forgery, Pseudepigrapha, and Other Typologies of Continuation in Latin Literature.' In *Forgery Beyond Deceit: Fabrication, Value, and the Desire for Ancient Rome*, edited by John North Hopkins and Scott McGill, 158–76. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pennoyer, Peter. 2019. 'The past & future of Notre-Dame.' *New Criterion* 37: 55–58.

Petrarch, Francesco. 1992. *Letters of Old Age: Rerum senilium libri I–XVIII*. Translated by Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin and Reta A. Bernardo, Vol. 1: Books I–IX. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Rix, Robert W. 2023. *The Vanished Settlers of Greenland: In Search of a Legend and Its Legacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, Fred C. 1984. 'Medieval, the Middle Ages.' *Speculum* 59: 745–56.

Roach, Levi. 2021. *Forgery and Memory at the End of the First Millennium*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Ruthven, K.K. 2001. *Faking Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schiele, Alexandre, and Bernard Schiele. 2022. 'Archaeological representations in the media: the dominance of pseudo–Archeology.' *Review of Science, Mathematics and ICT Education* 16: 19–47.

Rud, Søren. 2017. *Colonialism in Greenland: Tradition, Governance and Legacy*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Speyer, Wolfgang. 1971. *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum. Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung*. Munich: C.H. Beck.

Summit, Jennifer, and David Wallace, eds. 2007. 'Medieval/Renaissance: After Periodization.' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37.

Totaro, Paola. 'Is the Turin Shroud real after all?' *The New European*, June 28, 2023. https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/is-the-turin-shroud-real-after-all/.

Trigg, Stephanie. 2016. 'Medievalism and theories of temporality.' In *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, edited by Louise D'Arcens, 196–209. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Utz, Richard. 2016. 'Academic medievalism and nationalism.' In *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, edited by Louise D'Arcens, 119–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Workman, Leslie J. 1995. 'Medievalism.' *The Year's Work in Medievalism* 10: 223-243.

Ziolkowski, Jan. 2001. 'The Highest Form of Compliment: *Imitatio* in Medieval Latin Culture.' In *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: A Festschrift for Peter Dronke*, edited by John Marenbon, 293–307. Leiden: Brill.