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Decolonizing the Middle Ages: Introduction

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Sunt enim non minus temporum quam regionum eremi et vastitates.

— Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*

Is it possible to colonize a region of history, as it is to colonize a region of geography? There are many reasons to believe so. The history of "The Middle Ages" begins at the precise moment when European imperial and colonial expansion begins.[1] The Middle Ages is Europe's Dark Continent of History, even as Africa is its Dark Ages of Geography.

Colonization of the past is an indispensable companion of empire. The very moves by which European nation-based empires establish themselves across vast reaches of geographic space, constituting themselves by a simultaneous assimilation and othering of these spaces and the people who inhabit them, involves them at the same time in the invention of a complementary past *other* to themselves, a past which belongs to, but which can never be granted full citizenship in, the nation of Modernity. A full exploration of the varying ways in which "The Middle Ages" and "medieval" have served the interests of empire over the past six hundred years (and continue to do so today) is beyond the scope of this introduction, or, indeed, of this special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*.[2] I want simply to begin to follow some leads among the early discourses which establish The Middle Ages not as a period in history, but as a vastness of time ripe for colonial exploitation.

Media tempestas

When we begin to look for the overlappings among discourses of histori-
cal and geographical colonialism, we are struck by how very much the early
Italian makers of The Middle Ages are already thinking about *geographical*
expansion.[3] Petrarch's passage on the Fortunate Isles in *Vita solitaria* 2.6.3
portrays the natives as "without culture" (*gens inculta*), similar to beasts
wandering in a wasteland at once savage and yet oddly pastoral.[4] Petrarch
also discusses in *Rerum familiarium* "the very famous but doubtful Island
of Thule," rejecting geographical curiosity in favor of a gaze which he fixes
on himself: "me ipsum nosse sufficiet: hic oculos aperiam, hic figam intui-
tum" [it will be enough for me to know myself; here I will open my eyes,
here I will fix my gaze].[5] It will be tempting to read this as Petrarch's decla-
ration of himself as a "new man," opening the way for all modern men to
know themselves. But the sentence which follows puts a damper on any
homo novus boosterism we might conjure. At the same time, it introduces
an idea far more significant for the creation of The Middle Ages—the
desire to know how it all turns out: "Orabo Eum qui me fecit, ut se michi
meque simul ostendat et, quod votum Sapientis est, notum michi faciat
finem meum. Vale" [I will pray to Him who made me that He show him-
self to me as well as myself to me and, as the Wise Man prays, that He
make me aware of my end. Farewell].[6] Petrarch's desire for a proleptic sal-
vation (or damnation), a crossing of the *saeculum*, is crucial to the making
of The Middle Ages, for by skipping ahead to read the ending, we render
the narrative of history null and void. In just such a void The Middle Ages
takes root.

By the time Petrarch writes his letter on Thule, Dante has already
broken the bonds of Geography. The "last voyage" of Ulysses (*Inferno*
26.79–142), a voyage that Portuguese and Catalan sailors will begin to
mimic less than three decades later, seems most obviously to relate to the
twin themes of geographical curiosity and knowing one's end (in this case,
damnation as the direct result of such curiosity indulged in a state of sin).
But we should not forget that the *Commedia* is itself a voyage of discovery.
In appreciating the spiritual pilgrimage we should not neglect the very literal
journey to the center of the earth (and a trip around it) on which it is
founded. This literal journey can in turn serve to figure for us the ways in
which the letter of the past as well as of geography will be used as raw mate-
rial for the production for export of colonialist tropologies, allegories, and
anagogies over the following centuries. More significant for our purposes,

however, is the way in which Dante stops Christian time, offering in his own person a Northwest Passage through time to the promised final glory of the Second Coming. Unlike Petrarch, he knows his end. But by this very act of knowing, he freezes the likes of Paolo and Francesca forever in a timeless, repetitive realm of static moral debasement. The Middle Ages is Hell.

It is Petrarch, of course, to whom we most often look for the first planting of this heart of darkness in the middle of history. In his *Epistola metrica*, he complains:

> Vivo, sed indignans: quod nos in tristia fatum
> secula dilatos peioribus intulit annis.
> Aut prius aut multo decuit post tempore nasci;
> nam fuit et fortassis erit felicius evum;
> in medium sordes. In nostrum turpia tempus
> confluxisse vides. . . .

> [I live, but unhappily, for fate has put us off into sad centuries
> for worse years. It were better to be born either earlier or much
> later, for there was once and perhaps will be again a happier age.
> You see *into the middle* squalor, into our time, baseness have
> flowed together. . . .][7]

In the conclusion to the epic poem which bears the very name of the Dark Continent, Petrarch launches his work into time:

> Felices quos illa prius meliora tulerunt
> Tempora! Nosque utinam . . . Nequicquam uana precamur!
> Non licet ire retro. . . .
> . . . .
> . . . Michi degere vitam
> Impositum varia rerum turbante procella.
> At tibi fortassis, si—quod mens sperat et optat—
> Es post me victura diu, meliora supersunt
> Secula: non omnes veniet Letheus in annos
> Iste sopor! Poterunt discussis forte tenebris
> Ad purum priscumque iubar remeare nepotes.

> [Ah, happy those whom better days than ours
> have nourished; would that I—but all in vain
> my futile wish. It is impossible

to *turn back on our path.* . . .

. . . .

My life is destined to be spent 'midst storms
and turmoil. But if you [the poem], as is my wish
and ardent hope, shall live on after me,
a more propitious age *will come again*:
this Lethean stupor surely can't endure
forever. Our posterity, perchance,
when the *shadows* have lifted, may enjoy
once more the *radiance* the ancients knew.][8]

Here in the *Africa* Petrarch establishes most of the language which will be key to the European colonization of The Middle Ages: the idea that there is a middle time, a squalid time of shadows which follows Roman Antiquity and which will in turn be followed by a second coming of light, of radiance, a period Petrarch believes he will never live to see. Implicit in Petrarch's historiography is the idea of linear time and of unidirectional movement through it. "It is impossible to turn back," he tells us, but he hopes we may return to the ancient radiance by going forward in a sort of circumnavigation of Time.

Indeed, the passage has a remarkable subtext: *Africa*'s journey through time is played out in the form of a sea voyage through troubled waters toward imagined destinations. It tells of ships burnt by their captains to prevent retreat, of stormy passages at sea, the churning ocean, and the sun emerging after a storm. This is precisely what one later writer will call the time before the cultural sun shines again: *media tempestas*.[9]

Petrarch wrote his *Africa* in 1338 or 1339; the *Epistola metrica* cited earlier was written in the early 1350s.[10] It is no coincidence that in a year intervening between these two passages, Jaume Ferrer, a Catalan seaman, made a passage of his own. An inscription and image on the *Catalan Atlas* of 1375 claims that he rounded the northwest coast of Africa in 1346 and sailed south beyond southern Morocco and the Canary Islands to a destination whose name already sounds entirely predictable: Riu de l'or, "River of Gold."[11] His voyage was one of the key early moments in Mediterranean expansion into the Atlantic beyond the Pillars of Hercules and the Fortunate Isles, past the psychological western limits of the Ancient World.[12]

The same metaphors of "darkness," "barbarism," "primitiveness," "squalor," and "Lethean stupor" are among those which Europeans after Petrarch will continue to use to describe both the Dark Continent and the

Dark Ages. And as Europeans make their way across the Atlantic, they will use these terms again to describe the inhabitants of the New World.[13]

The interconvertibility of space and time is already provided for in the colonizers' own discourse, of course. It is the European explorers themselves who discover this rip in the continuum of darkness. In Johannes Fabian's well-known construction of the "denial of coevalness," the inhabitants of the Americas, for example, are seen as living in a different time, as much as in a different space. Temporal colonization is already inherent in the colonialist project, then: the colonized other is "primitive," exists in a past state opposed to the European present. Although we may inhabit different spaces, newly colonized lands and The Middle Ages inhabit the same time. And in the same way that European colonization imposed a "stoppage of Native History" on its conquered subjects, the possibility of signal events in the Middle Ages, too, has been closed.[14] There can be no continuity, no impinging of time (and of peoples) which might threaten to link The Middle Ages in a natural way with present history. The chronological rupture cleaving The Middle Ages from history must be absolute so that any genealogies (say, the Middle Ages as "Europe's infancy") can be constructed under present control, any miscegenation carefully regulated, even if it cannot entirely be suppressed. The manifest history of the West ought to run directly from the brilliance of Antiquity to its natural successors in Petrarch and others. The thousand years which intervene are a gaping hole in history. But this gap can be made to serve in the writing of a typological history of the West.[15]

Indeed, The Middle Ages can only exist through typologies that define it as interval, as void of a meaning of its own. Petrarch transforms The Middle Ages into a time without qualities beyond a generalized sordidness, a time in which nuances of smaller periodic divisions, distinctions of peoples, language, or cultures become irrelevant. In closing off, and thus creating, this hole in time, Petrarch finds his most useful ally in the Christian view of history. Petrarch lives in the Sixth Age: the time which reaches from the first coming of Christ to Christ's Second Coming at the end of Time. Framed by these two events of transcendental significance, the Sixth Age itself is devoid of sense, devoid of events, fixed, closed off to the possibility of history. As Anthony Kemp explains in his study of Eusebius,

> In this time of silence between divine events, faith and authority
> can only be founded on the past: Christ and the apostles, who
> recede each year further from the grasp of present knowledge, into
> the ungraspable tenuousness of collective memory. The only way

> to palliate this recession of the focus of faith is to deny psychologically, and subsequently ideologically, the mutability of time and, as mutability is the essence of our experience of time, consequently to deny time itself.[16]

As a Christian, Petrarch lives in an open-ended, timeless time when nothing can happen, when we are further and further from Christ's promise in Matthew 24:35–36: "But of that day and hour no one knoweth." Who can know how far we are, then, from its fulfillment?

Like Dante, who finds his own personal day and hour, but more broadly, Petrarch reasserts the possibility of history, of closure and movement beyond it, within the Sixth Age. But unlike Dante, he chooses a secular second coming, a second coming of Rome which will have to do in the absence of any other resolution of history.[17]

Petrarch's straightforward solution is simply to declare that history will resume, that days and hours will come again. As a by-product of this process, however, he creates an intervening period untouched by history, still and forever caught in an open-ended wait for the end of Time, innocent of its own fallen nature. This is the point of origin for the "problem" of The Middle Ages: a typologically empty time recast by the machinery of Modernity as a specific *period* of history. The stopping of The Middle Ages creates a historical wasteland which it is now possible to fill with the stories of whatever one desires.

Bacon says it in his *Novum Organum* of 1620: "There are deserts and wastelands, not just of geography, but of time as well."[18] And these vastnesses, like any other sort of uncharted space, must be described, demarcated, and claimed; they must be made useful, made to bear fruit. It is the peculiar emptiness of The Middle Ages, as Petrarch and others simultaneously invented it and evacuated it of historical agency, which creates the opportunity for Europe's colonial exploitation of The Middle Ages over the next six or seven centuries. Its meaning, its very being can only derive from that gaze which is fixed on it by Modernity.

The simple correspondences we might establish between a colonized past and colonized new world soon complicate themselves, however. Nations can be imagined, can be built, across time as well as across space. Petrarch's creation of a middle time ripe for colonization arises from what is, in his own view, an act of de-colonization, a bold stroke of nation-building across time. Petrarch offers himself as that rare subaltern who finds the voice to speak as citizen laureate of a colonized Rome. Again in *Africa*, he has Lucius Scipio

predict the future of Rome, a prediction broken off with Titus as Scipio cannot bear to recount Rome's subsequent subjugation to rulers of Spanish and African origin: "Ulterius transire piget; nam sceptra decusque / Imperii tanto nobis fundata labore / Externi rapient Hispane stirpis et Afre" [I can go no further; for the scepter and dignity of the empire which was founded by us with such effort will be stolen by foreigners of Spanish and African race].[19] Petrarch calls for an uprising against these colonial powers.

One part of Petrarch's project will be that colonized Rome will come to understand its own precolonial essence if it can but throw off barbarian domination: "Quis enim dubitare potest quin illico surrectura sit, si ceperit se Roma cognoscere?" [who can doubt that Rome would swiftly rise again, if she began to know herself].[20] The true identity of the colonized Romans must first be restored in their own minds; only then will (in)surrection be possible. We see this anticolonialist Petrarch again in *Epistola metrica*, when he sloganeers "nisi surgimus, actum est" [unless we rise up, it is all over].[21] In the end, the Renaissance, as Petrarch defines it, is a *risorgimento*, a native uprising.

Ironically, then, it is with Petrarch's effort to throw off his own colonized past, to establish nationhood across time, that the colonization of The Middle Ages begins. Petrarch transforms the thousand-plus years separating him from the fall of true Rome to barbarian invaders into a *terra incognoscibilis* of History, a time not to be known. In a move typical of colonized subjects, he consigns the violence of this colonial experience to forgetting, to sleep, to shadow. "Tenebrae" becomes the shorthand, all that need, or can be, said about the middle times.

The making of the Middle Ages turns out to be a double act, at once colonization and decolonization. And an awareness of this duplicity must be read back into our understanding of geographical colonization and nation-building as well. In this troubling construction, liberation and repression all too happily inhabit an identical cultural signifier.

There remains a great deal of work to be done in appreciating the evolving ways in which modern Europe colonizes this vastness in the typological history of its own ascent. The recognition of the peculiar quality of The Middle Ages as unfulfilled time, however, can serve already as a starting point for restructuring the relation of The Middle Ages to Modernity, a problem which has been at the heart of much soul-searching among medievalists, especially those allied with university departments of literature, over the past decade.[22] Above all, this recognition exposes the futility of seeking a

solution through helping the academy "get it right" about the Middle Ages. When academic medievalism adopts as its goal the restoration of The Middle Ages to history, we fall too easily into the carping role of "instructing" Modernists (and postmodernists) concerning what the concrete *realities* of the Middle Ages were.[23] The recognition of The Middle Ages' role as an interval in typological time reminds us rather forcefully that The Middle Ages exists only in the typological history of Modernity. Our critique of Modernity cannot come from outside Modernity, then, cannot be effected by confronting Modernity with the "medieval realties" it wishes to deny. The denial is already built into The Middle Ages. Rather we must learn to use The Middle Ages as a staging ground for a disruption and critique of Modernity from within Modernity itself.

There are risks inherent, of course, in the adoption of colonial/postcolonial perspectives as a way of getting at the "problem" of The Middle Ages. Most obviously, we risk reimporting the very hegemonies we are working to overthrow, making "postcolonial theory," for example, into yet one more tool of Modern and postmodern colonization of The Middle Ages. To the extent that postcolonial theory itself has been based on models drawn chiefly from the French and English imperial experience and its aftermath, we may also find ourselves reinforcing hegemonies already present in The Middle Ages, in which French and English medieval cultures serve as *exemplars* against which all other Middle Ages are judged. Fortunately, there is already a great wariness concerning "French" and "English" hegemony over postcolonial theory within postcolonial discourse itself. Postcolonial theory is ever more open to diverse experiences of both colonialism and the postcolonial reaction to it.

As we seek to decolonize The Middle Ages, then, postcolonial studies provide a rich variety of resources for understanding the colonization process itself and the ways in which we might challenge and transform it. It is that concrete variety, rather than any particular abstract model of colonial or postcolonial relations which is the true value of postcolonial discourse for medievalists. And if we agree that colonization can (and did/does) take place in time as well as in space, then we have already taken the most important first step, for with the understanding that The Middle Ages is a colonized region within the history of Modernity, we let in not a static model or paradigm, but rather a dynamic contestation of power which holds within it, already, the inevitablility of change.

[J.D.]

The foregoing considerations, originally offered in slightly different form at a workshop held at Duke University in the fall of 1997, were among those which led us to propose a special issue of *JMEMS* on the topic "Decolonizing the Middle Ages." The studies we received in response reflect multiple points of entry into these questions, ranging from twelfth-century glosses on Augustine's *Confessions* and the shadowy presence of Arabic letters in the palimpsest of Spanish literature through *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and on to the appropriation of medieval paradigms in the colonies themselves, in nineteenth-century Australia. Despite the variety of topics addressed, certain common themes, already suggested by Petrarch, emerge: rupture (or "severance") of both blood and time lines; with it, rules of succession and supersession (and fear of miscegenation) in both nations and time; issues of pedagogy as part of both the project of colonialism and of opposition to it (and pedagogy, therefore, as key to decolonizing The Middle Ages).

Most of these themes are given their first elaboration in Kathleen Biddick's "The Cut of Genealogy: Pedagogy in the Blood."[24] In this study, Biddick questions Foucault's arguments for a genealogical history based on the supersession of sex over blood in search of "temporalities not subject to the supersession of 'that was then'; 'this is now.'" The pedagogical project embodied in the submissions of the Irish chiefs to Richard II in 1394 (at which time the chiefs were instructed in the ways of English knighthood) does not supersede the colonialist Statutes of Kilkenny (which forbade "mixing" of English and Irish and, in the process, created these "races"), so much as enfold them. Biddick's close reading of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* then finds the Wife arguing against Foucault and against the "that was then, this is now" still inherent in a genealogical periodization based on supersession. For Biddick, the way in which past and future, blood and pedagogy, fold into one another, obscuring and revealing at the same time "the traumatic coexistence of different temporalities and spatialities," offers to medieval studies a "genealogical project" that might get us out of the traps of traditional periodization and genealogy which so readily make too clean a cut between the *then* of The Middle Ages and the *now* of Modernity.

The genealogies of history also preoccupy the three Hispanists—Anthony Espósito, David Hanlon, and Luce López-Baralt—whose work forms the core of this number of *JMEMS*. Iberomedievalists often feel that they work under a double colonization: that represented by the colonized nature of the Middle Ages itself and that which arises from the dominant role of northern Europe, especially France and England, in the colonization of the discipline of medieval studies and of most forms of popular medieval-

ism. Scholars both inside and outside Iberomedievalism tend to see this field as occupying a "primitive," "backward," or "belated" position in relation to other "national" disciplines of Western European medieval studies. This is no doubt an accurate assessment in many respects, but we need to examine some of the power structures in the academy that help to make it true. One of these structures is the view, at least within the American academy, that medieval England and France represent some sort of norm for the Middle Ages from which all other instances simply deviate to a greater or lesser degree. This perception arises from a number of factors, not the least of them the hegemonic ascendency of France and England (and the "English" U.S.) at the time of the rise of academic medievalism. The story of the Middle Ages has largely been told from a northern European perspective, a perspective that pushes the Iberian Middle Ages to an exotic, orientalized fringe. Thus the grammar of the Middle Ages allows statements like "Spain never developed true feudalism" or "The epic tradition in Spain is relatively poor." These seem natural. They sound authoritative, disinterested. But were we to make a statement like "France never developed true Taifa states" or "The *kharja* tradition in medieval England remains relatively poor," we would be greeted with bewildered looks, at best.[25]

But it would be a mistake to explain this situation quite so simply, to blame it on nineteenth- and twentieth-century hegemonies alone. The "belatedness" of Spain is an artefact, as well, of its failure to put forward an uncolonized story of its own past, to find its way beyond the open secrets of its own genealogies. Spain's exoticizing of its miscegenetic past (or its absolute denial of that past—the other side of the coin) creates a Spanish Middle Ages which is always already colonized.

Such concerns underlie, in differing ways, the studies of the three Hispanists who write here. In "The Monkey in the *Jarcha*: Tradition and Canonicity in the Early Iberian Lyric," Anthony Espósito explores the way in which values such as national authenticity and sexual orthodoxy work themselves out in the task of canon formation, especially the case of medieval Castilian, where the scarcity of texts creates a situation in which "mere extancy guarantees authenticity." The locus of contestation of the canon, therefore, is shifted from texts themselves to writing about texts. Espósito shows how the canon of criticism on the Spanish epic has grown out of a need to establish this genre as the authentic voice of history by linking it through the concept of *tradicionalismo* to an unbroken and uncorrupted chain of oral repetition. A similar process of canon formation is at work in the case of the *kharjas*, refrains found in Arabic and Hebrew lyric *muwaššaḥa*.

The discovery by S. M. Stern in 1948 that some of these refrains contain phrases in what is apparently an Iberian Romance language is felt to be one of the great moments in Spanish literary historiography. These refrains, generally considered to be early examples of "women's song," are soon swept into the canon of Castilian literature as free-standing "Spanish" poems thought to present the authentic voice of a heroically surviving, though temporarily suppressed, Romance and Christian Spain. Espósito shows how the eagerness of critics to create some authentic voice of Romance Spain (and, for some, of Romance women) shouts down the Arabic or Hebrew authorial text on which that voice depends. This newly authenticated voice, distilled from its Arab source poem, is pressed into service to testify to the cultural destiny of the Spanish nation and to allow us, not at all incidentally, to efface the "queer space" of the Arabic *muwaššaḥa* that uses the "Romance woman's song" as its final refrain.[26]

David Hanlon, in "Islam and Stereotypical Discourse in Medieval Castile and León," analyzes other strategies for subordination of the Muslim majority within the frontiers of Christian Spain. As the vernacular manuscript culture grew apace with rapid southward expansion of the Christian frontier in thirteenth-century Spain, the ambivalent representation of the Muslim as both femininely docile and aggressively and virtuously chivalric reveals the cultural anxiety generated by the ambiguous status of the Mudejar (Muslim under Christian rule) as a semiautonomous, internal Other in medieval Spain. Hanlon draws on Homi Bhabha's understanding of the utility of stereotyping for colonialist discourse: stereotyping permits the maintenance of contradictory beliefs regarding the colonized, which are necessary to justify conquest and continuing surveillance of the conquered.

Analyzing legal structures and chronicles in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Castile and León, Hanlon finds two equivalents to the modern myth of racial purity and hierarchy that served eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonialists. He traces the function of two constructed genealogies of blood and spirit, the first an aristocratic notion of agnatic lineage employed to stabilize land tenure and authorize Mudejar subjection, and the second an ecclesiastical genealogy of apostolic spiritual succession. Drawing on Freud and Lacan, Hanlon argues that for both systems, the metaphoric and masking function of the fetish provided for Christians a psychologically and politically useful device with which both to recognize and to deny cultural difference between them and their Mudejar subjects. This masking also enabled Christian Spain to deal with the fear of miscegenation as a threat to agnatic purity. Hanlon concludes his complex analysis by suggesting that exploration of

other postcolonial studies will yield new working hypotheses with which to approach Hispanomedievalism that will prove valuable in "identifying our disciplinary myopias and opening up new avenues of enquiry."

Luce López-Baralt transports the question of cultural genealogy to Cervantes in her article "The Supreme Pen (Al-Qalam Al-Aʿlā) of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quixote*." Cervantes concludes his novel by giving the last word to its fictional author, the Arab historian Cide Hamete Benengeli, who addresses his dry pen, now left hanging on a wire from a kitchen hook, with instructions to counsel any hazardously intrepid, would-be continuators that the story of Don Quixote was born for her alone and she for it (*pen* being feminine in Spanish). López-Baralt suggests that if read from Islamic cultural coordinates (which Cervantes could have known from his years of captivity in Algiers), this prodigious pen of destiny derives from the Supreme Pen of the Koran, which has from the beginning of time inscribed the inexorable destiny of human beings on a Well-Preserved Tablet. The text of *Don Quixote* is sealed forever, and to attempt to change it by resuscitating its characters would be to violate a destiny protected by the tomb. Reading the final scene of the novel thus, Cervantes' quarrel with the spurious Part II published under the name of Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda acquires additional resonance, since those who disputed divinely inscribed discourse were considered ill-born traitors against sacred revealed truth.

But Baralt's suggestion seems "destined" to fuel other chapters in Cervantine criticism and literary history on several counts. First, attribution of a sacred Islamic tradition inscribed in the fabrication of *Don Quixote* undermines, with an ironic twist, the overworked idea that it should be considered the originating moment of the modern *European* novel, and it supports assertions by some scholars that the novel as a genre, wherever one claims it to have arisen, is the product of the cultural hybridity of a multilingual empire. Second, rather than burying Cervantes' quarrel with Avellaneda, this reading invites attention to the intertextuality of their engagement with the authorial pen. Cervantes concludes Part I invoking Ariosto's "miglior plettro" (better plectrum) for a forthcoming sequel, which is transfigured by Avellaneda in his continuation as a "mejor pluma" (better pen), and which in turn reappears at the end of Cervantes' Part II as Cide Hamete's uniquely privileged "pluma" or "peñola" (pen, quill pen). Third, López-Baralt's reading has significance for the much-debated Cervantine ambivalence in treating the question of Spain's Morisco population, expelled from Spain in the interval between the publication of the two parts of *Don Quixote*.

Louise D'Arcens's essay, "From Holy War to Border Skirmish: The Colonial Chivalry of Sydney's First Professors," looks at the appropriation of the Middle Ages in a very different colonial setting, that of nineteenth-century Australia. She examines early Australian adaptations of Victorian popular medievalism, which she sees as heavily mediated by the processes of colonization. Through an analysis of the speeches of the earliest professors at the University of Sydney, D'Arcens argues that popular medievalism provided discourses to represent and promote a wide range of colonizing practices, but also to challenge the mercantilism and utilitarianism of colonial life in Australia. She also demonstrates how the Sydney professors drew upon medieval figures and images to formulate a masculine colonial identity specific to the local environment. She, like Hanlon, analyzes how the metaphorical structures of such discourse veil the violence of their dispossession and subjugation of colonized subjects. By understanding the complex role of medievalism in the colonial process in Australia, we extend our knowledge of the centrality of the medieval past in the politics of modern nation- and empire-building.

In the final essay on this special-issue topic, "In the Middle," Catherine Brown ruminates on the nature of our relation to that foreign country which is the past, most particularly, on our role as students and teachers of that "irreducibly foreign" Middle Ages. She explores the stake we often seem to have in preserving an exotic, dissimilar Middle Ages, perhaps as a way of justifying our own intermediatory role. Along the way, Brown issues several important caveats for a too facile "application" or "appropriation" of post-colonial theory by medievalists, likening such approaches to the educative and modernizing programs of the metropolis.

What Brown seeks, instead, is "another way to think the relation between then and now," asking, "What would it feel like to be colonized by the Middle Ages?" Taking as her starting point the assertion in L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (1953) that "the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there," Brown sets up a dialogue among diverse textual moments in Augustine's *Confessions*, modern thinkers on our relation to the other and to ourselves in time (Johannes Fabian, Frederic Jameson, Dominick La Capra, and Paul Zumthor), Beatus of Liebana's eighth-century *Liber Apologeticus*, and the works of eleventh- and twelfth-century biblical scholars. At the same time, she sets another dialogue going among these readings and the parallel exploration of past, present, and future in Meredith Monk's video *Book of Days*. The key moment, however, is Brown's unexpected encounter with a medieval reader in the margins of a manuscript of Augustine's *Con-*

fessions. Brown puzzles through this moment in which she feels herself "interpellated" by her medieval coreader in an instant that defies both past and present. A beginning of understanding of this moment comes from the comestatory images of medieval biblical exegetes and from the voice of Augustine, already digested in Petrarch's *Secretum*: "Make those texts familiar to you." Brown understands "familiar" most literally, "make them as your family, your own flesh and blood." Brown discovers then, an alternate bloodline, transcending past and present others, in the act of reading itself.

It is not our goal to reduce Brown's complex reading to that simple discovery. We have placed Brown's essay last because we feel that, far from concluding the selections here, it opens out instead on a number of vital ways in which we might begin to explore our relations with the past as readers, scholars, and teachers. In the process, it also suggests new directions for academic writing in which, as the obverse of medieval exegetical ideas, the flesh and blood of the medieval scholar (in both senses) enters the body of the text.

[J.D. and M.G.]

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Notes

1 I use the phrase "The Middle Ages" to refer to that Middle Ages which is a colonized space in the narrative of the West; otherwise the usual chronological sense is meant.

2 Perhaps the most common use of The Middle Ages is as one of the hiding places (along with the nearly always brutish nature of the colonized native) which Europe finds in which to tuck away some of the violence of imperialism. By insisting on the brutality of its medieval past, it distracts itself and others from the violence of its present: "we used to be like that" (i.e., "we aren't anymore").

3 See Theodore J. Cachey Jr., "Petrarch, Boccaccio, and the New World Encounter," *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991): 45–59.

4 The relevant passage from Petrarch's *Vita solitaria* reads: "gentem illam pre cunctis ferme mortalibus solitudine gaudere, moribus tamen incultam adeoque non absimilem beluis ut, nature magis instinctu quam electione sic agentem, non tam solitarie vivere quam in solitudinibus errare seu cum feris seu cum gregibus suis dicas" [those people enjoy greater solitude than nearly all other mortals, but they are so savage in their customs and so similar to beasts, that, letting themselves be led by natural instinct rather than their free will, they do not so much live alone as err/roam in desert(ed) places, with the wild beasts or with their flocks] (Cachey, "Petrarch," 49; trans. at n. 8). In *De Canaria*, Boccaccio speaks more positively of the Canary Islanders than does Petrarch. See Cachey, "Petrarch," 54–58.

5   Petrarch, *Le Familiari* 3.1, ed. Vittorio Rossi, 4 vols. (1933; repr. Florence: Sansoni, 1968), 1:109; trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, *Rerum familiarium libri I–VIII*, 2 vols. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 1:119.

6   Ibid.

7   Petrarch, *Epistola metrica* 3.33, lines 1–6, ed. F. Neri et al., *Rime, Trionfi e poesie latine* (Milan: Ricciardi, n.d.), 802. Translations here and elsewhere are my own unless otherwise noted. See Theodor E. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages,'" *Speculum* 17 (1942): 240–41 n. 4. The large literature on the term *Middle Ages* and the question of who first invented it is a natural starting place for this inquiry, though my interest is in the *idea* of the "middle time," not the term itself. My goal here is not to discover the "first use" of *Middle Ages* or to debate its appropriateness or the appropriateness of its evil twin "The Renaissance." Rather, I hope to begin to trace the mapping of European history in terms of a historical "middle" (and the peculiar characteristics possessed by this middle) in conjunction with other mappings soon to take place on an as yet unacknowledged middle continent. For the purposes of this brief sketch, however, I confine myself to some of the passages relating to the origins of "middle ages" which have been studied by Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception," and others. I have found especially useful Paul Lehmann, "Vom Mittelalter und von der lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters," *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters* 5.1 (1914): 1–25; George Gordon, "*Medium Aevum* and the Middle Age," *Society for the Propagation of English*, Tracts 19 (1925): 3–28; Franco Simone, "La coscienza della Rinascita negli Umanisti," *La Rinascita* 2 (1939): 838–71; and 3 (1940): 163–86; M. L. McLaughlin, "Humanist Concepts of Renaissance and Middle Ages in the Tre- and Quattrocento," *Renaissance Studies* 2 (1988): 131–42; Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), especially the first chapter, "Antiquity and the New Arts" (14–32); and Albert Russell Ascoli, "Petrarch's Middle Age: Memory, Imagination, History, and the 'Ascent on Mount Ventoux,'" *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991): 5–43.

8   Petrarch, *Africa* 9.446–57, ed. Nicola Festa, *L'Africa* (Florence: Sansoni, 1926), my emphasis, ellipsis in line 447 is Petrarch's; trans. Thomas G. Bergin and Alice S. Wilson, *Petrarch's "Africa"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 239, lines 625–41.

9   It is, of course, quite possible that explorers' narratives of exploration and storms at sea are themselves based on Petrarchist tropes. For a study of the notion "that amatory and imperialist writing in this period [the ages of exploration and colonization] share a discursive stream," see Roland Greene, "Petrarchism among the Discourses of Imperialism," in *America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750*, ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 131. The phrase "media tempestas" in reference to a middle age of history was first used in 1469 by Johannes Andrea in praise of the exceptional latinity ("for a German") of Nicholas of Cusa (Gordon, "*Medium Aevum*," 10; Lehmann, "Vom Mittelalter," 6). The etymological connection between *media tempestas* and *tempest* reflects a specialization in the meaning of *tempestas* from "time" to "period of time" to "season" to "stormy weather" to "a specific type of storm."

10 Ernest H. Wilkins, *The "Epistolae Metricae" of Petrarch* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1956), 32.

11 The image of Jaume Ferrer and his crew may be viewed, at this writing, at the following URL: http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/images/jpeg/i8_000ff.jpg. See also the edition of Abraham Cresques, *Der katalanische Weltatlas vom Jahre 1375: nach dem in der Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, verwahrten Original farbig wiedergegeben*, intro. and trans. Hans-Christian Freiesleben (Stuttgart: Brockhaus, 1977). Little is known about Ferrer beyond this evidence from the Catalan Atlas, as he apparently failed to return from his journey. Pierre Chaunu, *L'expansion européenne du XIIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), 95–96, provides a minimal historical context for Jaume's "échec."

12 The sources and impact of such mental edging needs further study, for North America was certainly known, and even colonized, by northern Europeans before 1492. The colonization of a "New World," then, is based, not on the discovery of something unknown, but on new circumstances which make it desirable to "speak" this world as opposed, say, to keeping knowledge of that world a secret in order to protect fishing grounds and profitable trade routes among Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia, and the British Isles. Clearly the "discovery" of the Americas occurs as much in discourse as in a concrete space. An interesting recent study of the fate of the Greenland settlement and the knowledge of North America before Columbus is Kirsten A. Seaver, *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000–1500* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). A significant aspect of the colonization of The Middle Ages is the way in which this proleptic northern (barbarian?) experience of North America continues to stand outside the narrative of Western expansion, for it fits into this narrative far less comfortably than does a "Renaissance" discovery of the New World.

13 At the same time, of course, especially when in "booster" mode, as Columbus often was, explorers tout the innocence and gentle simplicity of the inhabitants of the "New World." Such apparent contradictions in one part of the colonialist enterprise, here the geographical conquest, can lead us to seek for correspondences in the other, here the chronological one. Although it is difficult to discover any nostalgia for the innocence of life in the *media tempora* on the part of the humanists, it is easy enough to spot its reflexes in modern popular ideas of the Middle Ages as at times barbaric, brutish ("I'm gonna get medieval on your ass") and at other times as the haven of "simpler times." A recent use of this second version of The Middle Ages (often conflated with aspects of the Renaissance Faire) was the topic of a recent "Dilbert" episode in which office workers return joyously to an "organic" way of life, complete with jesters and mead, when an errant rocket knocks out communications satellites and cell phones, pagers and computers go down.

14 For tropes used by the Spanish conquerors to stop native history in Mexico, see José Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 106.

15 Fabian defines "Typological Time" as being "measured, not as time elapsed, nor by reference to points on a (linear) scale, but in terms of socioculturally meaningful events or, more precisely, intervals between such events" (23).

16   Anthony Kemp, *The Estrangement of the Past: A Study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7–8.

17   Columbus's first act in the New World is a striking repetition of the moves made by Dante and Petrarch to seal off the Sixth Age: he names the island on which he lands "San Salvador." If the Savior will not come to mankind, then mankind will come to the Savior (and the news of the Savior will be brought back by the Christ-Bearer himself).

18   Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* 1:78. I cite the online edition at http://www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS/bacon.liber1.html.

19   Petrarch, *Africa* 2.274–76, ed. Festa. Cf. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception," 235 n. 1.

20   Petrarch, *Fam*. 6.2, ed. Rossi, 2:58. Cf. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception," 232 n. 3.

21   Petrarch, *Epist. met.* 3.33, l. 11, ed. Neri et al., 802. Cf. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception," 240 n. 4.

22   The decade began with the "New Philology" number of *Speculum* [65 (1990)] with studies by Stephen G. Nichols, Siegfried Wenzel, Suzanne Fleischman, R. Howard Block, Gabrielle M. Spiegel, and Lee Patterson. Two collections on medievalism at mid-decade are William D. Paden, ed., *The Future of the Middle Ages: Medieval Literature in the 1990s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994); and John Van Engen, ed., *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994). See also the collection edited by R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). A recent review of medieval studies from the perspective of medieval historians is Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 677–704. A useful selective bibliography is Brooke Heidenreich, "Studies in Medievalism: Recent Books and Articles," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997): 661–77. Prominent here are articles from the journal *Studies in Medievalism* which began publication in 1979. One hopes that the frequent focus in those pages on national and geographical medievalisms (e.g., "German medievalism," "Medievalism in North America") will alert readers to the rigidity of boundaries between national medievalisms rather than to legitimize them further. See also the studies by Kathleen Biddick cited in note 24 below.

23   I am referring obliquely here to Lee Patterson's contribution to the "New Philology" number of *Speculum*, "On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 87–108: "medieval studies, with its traditional respect for historical particularity, can challenge the universalist claims of contemporary theory and instruct postmodernist criticism in the historical complexity and concreteness of cultural forms" (106). There is no doubt that such a project is important and even necessary, but we are unlikely to get Modernity to listen to concrete *historical* particularities until we have successfully challenged the typological positions of The Middle Ages *within* Modernity and post-Modernity. An excellent example of a study which works both historical particularities and typological histories as it offers a critique of modern theory of the nation and of postcolonial

theory itself is Kathleen Davis, "National Writing in the Ninth Century: A Reminder for Postcolonial Thinking about the Nation," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28 (1998): 611–37. She concludes, "Coming from the space of the colonizing West, but from colonized time—in a sense both colonizer and colonized, but not fully either—the European Middle Ages can return to disrupt dichotomized space and linear time. Medievalists can effectively excavate the 'minus in the origin' that still grounds Western strategies for stereotyping and othering 'Third World' cultures today" (630).

24 Biddick apparently was the first scholar to explore the potential of postcolonial paradigms for medievalists as they try to restructure their relation, not just to the Middle Ages, but to the academic discipline of medieval studies in Modernity as well. See "Decolonizing the English Past: Readings in Medieval Archaeology and History," *Journal of British Studies* 32 (1993): 1–23; and more recently Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

25 A similar hegemony holds *within* the field of "medieval Spanish" letters in which the dominance of Castile within Spain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries maps "medieval Spanish literature" according to the politics of the modern Spanish state. Non-Castilian medieval literatures (Catalan-Valencian, Galician-Portuguese, Latin, Occitan, not to mention, Hebrew and Arabic) are relegated to the margins, although, for example, Catalan-Valencian literary life is at least as rich as and, in many ways, better attested than the literature of medieval Castile.

26 Perhaps the greatest evidence of success of the appropriation of the *kharja* by Castilian literature is the fact that most English-language scholars have begun to use the *Spanish* transliteration of the Arabic (English transliteration: *muwaššaḥa, kharjas*) even when writing in English. In English *jarcha* ceases to be a transliteration and becomes, rather, the name of a genre of Spanish poetry, whose phonetic component is Spanish, rather than Arabic.