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Our Daily Middle Ages

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One of the most widely taught texts when engaging with the history of the English language is the *Lord's Prayer*.¹ As first summarized in its linguistic development by philologist Albert S. Cook in 1891, it is one of the few texts in English that exists in hundreds of versions throughout the entire history of the language, preserved in manuscripts in what we have come to term Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, Modern English, and Contemporary English, simply because of the powerfully continuist impact of Christianity. Whether it is *Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum. . .*, *Oure fadir that art in heuenes. . .*, *Our Father which art in heaven. . .*, or *Our Father in heaven. . .*, all historical versions include the request: *urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg. . .* or, moving directly from the Old English to the contemporary version, *Give us this day our daily bread. . .* I thought I should refer to this prayer in the title for this essay because its impressive longevity, while undergoing considerable linguistic transformation over time, resembles the *longue durée* (staying power) of many other features and practices that originated during the period in which the *Lord's Prayer* was first translated from Latin into English as well as into all other European languages. If I pick the word from the phrase that has undergone the most significant morphemic change since the prayer's first translations and compare it to its contemporary instantiation, I can venture to make several observations.

My first and immediate observation is that our current adjective *daily* is so much more concise and efficient than its Old English predecessor, *gedæghwamlican*. To say “dai-ly” in Old English, you not only needed *dæg-hwam-* (each day) and the ending *-lic* (ly), but also a prefix (*ge-*, which may have indicated completeness or perfection), and *lic-* needed a weak adjective accusative ending *-an* that aligned with the noun *hlaf* (loaf) following it. Wouldn't you say that we have made incredible progress from the long and complicated *gedæghwamlican* to the short and pithy *daily*? And isn't this what we generally think about what has happened to European culture and civilization between the fourth century and our twenty-first century? Progress, and advances in technology and civilization? That said, isn't there also a vague contradictory and somewhat nostalgic response that makes us wonder if our dropping of the majority of morphemes from *gedæghwamlican* to

¹ A preliminary version of this paper was presented as keynote for the International Summer School “Moyen Âges d'en haut et d'en bas : perméabilités, interactions et débats entre recherche académique et cultures populaires” sponsored by the University of Grenoble, France, and the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, in 2022. I am grateful to Estelle Doudet and Filippo Fonio for their invitation, and to all summer school participants for their questions and comments.

daily may have cost us something that may have been meaningful, beautiful, original, or simply exotic, and that something about the way we were and spoke may have been lost as we continued to progress and advance?

Medieval as a Brand

Let us move away from the history of the English language and into our recent past: in September 2022, a new medievalist movie was released to much public relations fanfare. It is the most expensive Czech movie ever made, and it includes a cast of international stars, among them American Ben Foster, Australian Sophie Lowe, Britain's Michael Caine, and Germany's Til Schweiger, thus clearly aiming for a world-wide audience. The movie's trailers proudly proclaimed the film's "authenticity," the widely known formula of being "inspired by true events," based on the story of "one of the most fearless warriors in history" (Renner). One of the trailers' narrating voices speaks of two trinities: "power, tyranny, violence," and Europe being engulfed in "war, plague, and famine." The trailer's legend, interrupting scenes of grimdark slaughter and battle, promises a superhero: "One man – will command the fate of an Empire," and that hero is allowed to self-characterize by saying a) "we don't kidnap women" (invoking chivalry), and b) "If you choose to fight, you may die, but for your cause, and that is a good death" (promising heroism based on altruistic warrior values). Another one of the trailers ends by touching on an audience's expected desire to be on the side of progress and the people, against oppressive and unjust premodern rulership, stating: "Kings may be chosen by God, but they still make the mistakes of men" (Renner). And the movie poster chimes in by adding another trinity of terms meant to summarize the movie: "For honor, for justice, for freedom." For many of those who habitually watch medieval(ist) movies, the emotionally rousing narrative recipe for Mel Gibson's 1995 *Braveheart* comes to mind.

I will not here focus on the details of plot and its relationship to historical reality. The film is based on the early biography of the legendary Hussite commander Jan Žižka, a successful mercenary military leader in fourteenth-century Bohemia, who is said never to have lost a battle. However, I will mention that among Director Petr Jákł's declared objectives with the movie is the worldwide promotion of his country, the Czech Republic, hence the selection of one of the most widely known Czech national heroes as the protagonist.

If we review the totality of terms used to advertise this movie, and if we add to this the images chosen to attract audiences on posters (raised swords, a castle under siege, flaming arrows raining onto a huge battle, and a protagonist who has lost an eye in combat), we understand why the director and producers thought it would be smart to go with a minimalist title for the movie, *Medieval*. After all, the story has all the ingredients most members of a global audience would expect

from any cultural artifact supposed to depict life in medieval central Europe c. 700 years ago. Thus, while the movie is historically situated in what today is the Czech Republic and during the second half of the fourteenth century, this specificity (and concomitant claim to historical authenticity) seems less important than its fit within the general horizon of expectations current audiences have of what we call the Middle Ages. If the movie makers had named the movie after its Czech hero, Jan Žižka, as did the 1955 Czechoslovak precursor movie directed by Otokar Vavra, global audiences might not watch. After hundreds of medieval-themed movies since the early twentieth century, this movie openly acknowledges that we no longer need to call it *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), *Joan of Arc* (1948), *Ivanhoe* (1952), *El Cid* (1961), *Becket* (1964), *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1982), *Lionheart* (1987), *Braveheart* (1995), *King Arthur* (2004), *Arn: The Knight Templar* (2007), *Robin Hood* (2010), *Conquest: 1453* (2012), *The Last Duel* (2021), *The Green Knight* (2021), *The Northman* (2022). We have reached a point where, after experiencing a sufficient dose of medievalist media, simply calling a movie *Medieval* will be enough to conjure up the usual suspects among the elements that will make any cultural production look recognizably as connecting with the one-thousand-year period we have been sandwiching between Classical Antiquity and the alleged rebirth of that Classical Antiquity during the Renaissance. Therefore, I will claim here and now that, with the advent of the 2022 movie *Medieval*, the term has finally and officially become a brand name, similar to Google, which is used by a majority of people worldwide for all search machines and, as a verb, to describe the act of searching the internet, or Kleenex, which is the most widely used term in many countries for disposable tissues. When we hear or read the term Medieval, or even a variant spelling such as “MediEvil,” it elicits a host of immediate associations, including the ones with which the movie *Medieval* advertises itself. Inversely, even when a fantasy narrative displays certain features, for example swords, knights, castles, and jousts, it will almost automatically be recognized and categorized as “medieval.”²

This is the reason why George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* and the TV series *Game of Thrones* have been recognized by their audiences as situated in “the ‘medieval world’ of Eurasia from c. 400 to 1500 CE” (Waxman). Martin himself has claimed that the fictional societies he created are “strongly grounded in history” and are meant to serve as a corrective against what he calls the “Disneyland Middle Ages” abounding with “princes, princesses and knights in shining ar-

² The development of this kind of branding may have existed for medievalist literary texts as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, when Rudyard Kipling has one of his protagonists in the short story “Dayspring Mishandled” receive a pot boiler writing assignment from his entrepreneurial supervisor centered around the keywords “a knight, a castle, a young girl” (Utz, “Writing” 159).

mor.” However, unlike history-based or history-adjacent narratives which fictionalize identifiable historical persons, eras, events, and geographies, *Game of Thrones* is completely devoid of such authenticating anchors. Instead, it displays a self-contained world, with its own geography, languages, cultures and a distinct nonhistorical temporality – a place entirely *Neo*, so to speak. Rather than creating traditional kinds of historical authenticity and authority, it offers a simulacrum of medievalness, neither an original nor a copy of an original, engaging in a sufficient number of cultural references to make it belong to and reinforce the brand, Medieval.

We know who created the Google and Kleenex brands, and we can understand in whose interest these firms launched public relations campaigns to exalt the features of their products and make them market leaders. But who created the brand we all recognize as “medieval” and for what purpose? One group of brand creators is easily identifiable: it is the kind of people who research and teach medieval culture in schools and in higher education, individuals our societies have decided to educate, entitle, and remunerate to investigate and know everything there is to know about the medieval past. Following in the tradition of early modern private scholars and antiquarians, this group, which staked its claim as an essential subject at the modern university in the second half of the nineteenth century, turned knowledge about the 1000 years between Classical Antiquity and the Renaissance into a science, an academic specialization difficult enough to warrant their own existence and importance. This development happened at the same time as a massive wave of nationalism swept over Europe and as nations were eager to prove that they and their languages and territories had long histories and traditions legitimizing them, differentiating them, and hopefully giving them an edge over the histories and traditions of other nations.³

This academic competition between and among nations was an extension of the political, military, and economic competition for colonies around the world and for territories in Europe whose historical heritage was, unsurprisingly, contested. Alsace-Lorraine is such an example: the German Emperor Wilhelm I, thinking of himself as a reincarnation of the medieval Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa, had himself represented in the sculpture of the prophet Daniel on the cathedral in Metz. And the imperial chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, intervened personally to establish the first chair of English philology on the European continent at the Imperial University of Strasbourg. Bismarck and his contemporaries viewed English as a Germanic language, and appointing a medievalist specializing in Chaucer and *Beowulf* was intended to support the Germanization of Alsace-Lorraine.

³ The role of nationalism in the creating of European medievalisms has been acknowledged by numerous publications, including Le Lostec (2022), Symes (2011), Utz (“Academic”, 2016), and Warren (2011).

More generally, there is overwhelming evidence that the existence of the entire profession of medieval studies in departments of history, literature, archaeology, and art history is complicit with the same nationalism that brought about two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century. Despite claims of methodological historical and philological disinterestedness, medievalists profit from and participate in research focus areas that served patriotic if not nationalist agendas. This is the reason why early academic scholarship on the Middle Ages invents a time replete with white male epic heroes like King Arthur, El Cid, Roland, and Siegfried, each serving as bright and shining examples of desired national character traits to bind together imagined national communities.

Concomitant with these national desires for origins, professional medievalists also make sure their position as the exclusive gatekeepers of knowledge about the medieval past is distinguishable from any non-academic engagements with the Middle Ages. As a consequence, those who read, celebrate, play, perform, and reenact medievalia without the stamp of academic approval, are branded dilettantes and amateurs, and their various practices are othered as “medievalism,” not serious “Medieval Studies.” To defend the distinction between the popular and the academic, medievalists also claim that the total otherness or alterity of the Middle Ages demands the period be studied *sine ira et studio* and from a distance, and without projecting any of our own contemporary contexts onto them. These two diametrically opposed approaches to engaging with the Middle Ages, deftly defined by Juanita Feros Ruys (212-25) as “pastism” and “presentism,” still impact academic discussions today.

At least since the late nineteenth century, academic medievalists have amassed an enormous mountain of knowledge on the medieval past and shaped the brand we recognize as “medieval.” Often not quite self-aware, they have done so suffering under the illusion of scientific and science-like integrity, not always comprehending how their own methodological and subject choices were, and probably always will be, influenced by explicit and implicit forms of bias. Those who are self-aware have been trying to fight against some of the notions their predecessors have created, combatting with their studies the dangerous and virulent abuse of neomedieval ideology and symbols like those in the 2011 racist ramblings of Norwegian white supremacist mass murderer Anders Breivik or the anti-Semitic and white nationalist demonstrators in the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, VA, in 2017. And they have exposed the invented medievalist elements infusing the ideologies of the likes of Vladimir Putin in Russia and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.

The research done by academic medievalists since has had an impressive impact on how the brand “Medieval” has been taught in at all levels of formal education, embedded in fiction, and presented in the media. Despite all these efforts, however, it appears that scholars feel their work to be positively Sisyphean. Consider,

for example, the impressive production of scholarly works (mostly journal essays and books) exposing the Right of the Lord's First Night (*Herrenrecht; droit de cuiassage*) as a fictional narrative invented for political purposes and not a reality ever practiced. In 1995, a single blockbuster movie, Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*, a narrative that enacts the fictional right as a reality and main motivating factor for its protagonist, pretty much obliterated the existing scholarship among the majority of viewers and has ensured that the incorrect story will continue as an element of our daily Middle Ages for generations to come.⁴

Andrew Elliot has come to a similarly demoralizing conclusion when investigating how the Middle Ages have been appropriated in twenty-first century mass media. Elliot describes how twenty-first-century popular medievalisms originate in a three-step process: first, medievalia are expropriated from history, as when medieval objects, concepts, and symbols are invoked in a postmedieval context; second, this expropriation is repeated and retransmitted, allowing the meaning of the object, concept, and symbol to gradually stand for new meanings increasingly unrelated to any historical reality; and third, the object, concept, or symbols are assimilated, translated, and modified so that they are completely "divested . . . of [their] original meanings and context-dependent significance making it ripe to be grafted onto modern concerns" (Elliot 6). Elliott shows this process at work for the use of the (medieval) crusades by both George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden:

In both cases, although for contrary outcomes, the cultural symbolism of the Crusades was excised from its original meaning, transmitted through the mass media in a new form, and ultimately became the subject of a dispute not over their original meaning but over their new significance as an ideological weapon. Thus, when bin Laden calls on his fellow Muslims to resist a Crusader invasion of the Holy Land, he is referring to an established tradition which has, through relentless repetition, assimilated the modern armed incursions into the Middle East with twentieth- and twenty-first-century *crusades*. Likewise, it is precisely *because* the term was already in use that Bush's famous description of the War on Terror as a Crusade had such enormous political and ideological resonance. (Elliot 6-7)

⁴ On this topic, *Braveheart* is preceded by the 1965 movie *The War Lord*, which, like *Braveheart*, convinced viewers of its historicity by the way it created the impression of authenticity. Art directors Alexander Golitzen and Henry Bumstead built a medieval village with a tower, a moat and a drawbridge on four acres of Universal Studios' Upper Lake backlot. A river was redirected to create an island and a bank ninety feet in width, and some of the location sequences were filmed at a waterfowl game refuge in Calouse, California. With Charlton Heston in the role of the knight, Chrysagon, the film gained additional authority, just as Mel Gibson's performance as William Wallace added notoriety to *Braveheart*. Another important medium offering continuity to the narrative about the fictional medieval "right" is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Il nozze di Figaro* (1786), which continues to be performed in opera houses all over the world. For a more detailed discussion, see Utz ("Mes souvenirs").

According to Elliot, social media and other online mass medievalisms are mostly disconnected from the historical Middle Ages so important to the twentieth-century combat against anachronism and mythography but only and exclusively exist because of contemporary meme culture. In this meme culture, traditional models of authority and authenticity for communicating about the medieval past are irrelevant. Instead of the onerous identification of sources, causes, and paths of transmission, which would challenge ambiguity and inaccuracy, the modes of dissemination for medievalist memes in contemporary mass media are examples of Jean Baudrillard's simulacra, presenting world-wide audiences with copies of copies without an original. However, even a Baudrillardian analysis of the vertical relationships between contemporary medievalisms and the Middle Ages will not do justice to the empty signifiers dominating current mass media. What is needed to fully comprehend these medievalist memes is an investigation into the horizontal relationships between various contemporary and multiply mediated mass medievalisms. In the tradition of Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil," Elliot calls his examples "banal medievalisms." They are *bricolages* of ideological redeployments of medievalist tropes or memes or "the Middle Ages in the twenty-first century media landscape" as "unconscious sites of unchallenged heritage and, ultimately, unchallenged reference points in our collective imagination" (Elliot 16).

While I agree with Elliot on the ways in which medievalist tropes or memes are redeployed in the twenty-first century, I see the only major difference between these memes and tropes and those that existed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the increased speed at which they are deployed and distributed, an accelerated pace rendered possible by new technologies of distribution.⁵ No doubt, this pace is the one reason why contemporary medievalists feel outmaneuvered and overwhelmed when it comes to combatting political abuses, mythographies, and anachronisms of the past in a concerted manner.

All this would indicate that, while we academics may have provided much detailed information on the medieval past via research and scholarship, our impact on the general public has remained rather limited: while we are teaching classes with medieval content matter, most of our focus has remained on what we call the *real* Middle Ages, an issue Kevin J. Harty once referenced ironically with the title of his *The Reel Middle Ages* (2006); while we continue to deepen our knowledge in everything from archaeology and codicology through literature and linguistics, most of our scholarship still is and will continue to be directed toward our own peers, which means that a majority of published essays are in fact never read or

⁵ For pre-twenty-first-century examples of *simulacra* in the reception of the Middle Ages, see Mayer.

cited by anyone;⁶ and while many of us have been embracing opportunities for parsing our scholarship for public venues, such work still only ever seems to scratch the surface of the maelstrom of medievalist undercurrents in contemporary society, especially when published in outlets whose readers already share our own views on education and policy.

Another cause for the limited influence of academic scholarship on the general appreciation of medieval culture in postmedieval times is that even those academics interested in the reception history of medievalia often focus only on examples of the misappropriation or abuse of ideas of the medieval period. In fact, an observer of published scholarship in medievalism studies external to the field might well conclude that most features of medieval culture welling back up or continuing in modernity connect almost naturally with right-wing nationalism, racism, and sexism instead of any benign purposes.⁷ While this impression is incorrect, as Jan Ziolkowski's magisterial six-volume *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity* (2018) and much other scholarship conclusively prove, the indebtedness of modern academic criticism to enlightenment thought and its animosity toward all past forms of religious and political medievalism and conservatism will likely continue to produce much scholarship that sees the vast majority of contemporary medievalisms as inimical to progressive causes.⁸

Ironically, the focus of so much academic scholarship on the abuses of the Middle Ages by various postmedieval practices may well at times reinforce long-standing views of the Middle Ages itself as a dark and uncivilized time, views first promulgated by Francesco Petrarca and other Renaissance humanists (Heers). Overall,

⁶ According to Biswas & Kirchherr, 82% of peer-reviewed academic articles in the humanities are never cited; in the social and natural sciences fewer than one third of such articles are cited, and only about one-fifth of these cited papers were actually read. Overall, an article in a peer-reviewed academic journal is read in its entirety by no more than ten people (which means many are not read at all).

⁷ A recent literary enactment of the scholarly battle against the alt-right's appropriation of the Middle Ages, Phil Adamo's 2022 novel *The Medievalist*, suffers from "an excessive academicism," reads too much "like a classroom lecture," and cannot resist drawing some facile and didactic conclusions about the nature of racism" (*Kirkus Review*). In his "Postscript," Adamo admits to speaking on behalf of those who see most medievalisms as malevolent. His explicit intent was to create "a scenario in which protagonist medievalists . . . directly confronted . . . white supremacist antagonists" (312). Similarly facile conclusions were advanced by *The Bright Ages* (Gabriele and Perry), a volume that promised a new and revisionist history of the Middle Ages, but whose aggressive public relations campaign included the torpedoing of a critical review for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. As Jennifer Schuessler has indicated, this once again reveals that too many academic medievalists will rather engage in circular firing squads than collegial productive discussion and true engagement with the general public. For an excellent critique of facile and didactic conclusions about the nature of racism and popular medievalism, see Mondschein.

⁸ The tendency to focus mostly on the abuses and misappropriations of medieval culture seems to be less prevalent in Francophone scholarship on medievalism, as the entries for the 2022 *Dictionnaire du Moyen Âge Imaginaire* would indicate.

sizeable groups of scholars have recently attempted to extricate their own work from the still predominant Eurocentric traditions of medievalism and medieval studies and to include regions, groups, and practices previously marginalized. Following in the tradition of numerous English departments, which extended their curricula and scholarship to world literatures in English translation in the 1990s, many academics have broadened their work to include world-wide cultural practices resembling and/or happening simultaneously with the European Middle Ages, as in the 2019 essay collection *Whose Middle Ages?* (Albin et al.); abandoned Eurocentric perspectives entirely by rejecting all existing historical terminologies and categories, rendering visible the achievements of non-Eurasian cultures, and revealing premodern forms of globalism, as exemplified in the work of Geraldine Heng; or refocused from researching the predominant national paradigms of medievalism to the yet underexamined postcolonial receptions and transformations of European medievalisms around the world, as in recent publications by Louise D’Arcens and Stephanie Matabang. What remains to be seen is if these three paths of scholarship can engender as much enthusiasm and interest on and off campuses as European medievalisms do. Unlike European medievalisms, these academic focus areas do not have centuries-long cultural foundations and memorial anchors that serve as daily reminders of regional and national medieval pasts.

Kisha Tracy’s concise book on *Why Study the Middle Ages?* addresses many of these recent scholarly partialities. While she values the historicist lens so many traditional medievalists apply to the study of the medieval period, her preference is a radically presentist approach, one in which pretty much every aspect of modern and contemporary life can be viewed as in potential continuity with medieval human practices and thought. Addressing her fellow medievalists and current as well as prospective students of medievalia, she travels through temporal boundaries and academic categorizations to claim the Middle Ages as a world with immediate and direct contemporary relevance:

There is a common belief that the peoples of the past were somehow exempt from (positive, especially) human nature, had less of a sense of morality (by any definition) than we do now, or were unaware of basic human dilemmas or triumphs. . . . Relegating the Middle Ages to “primitive” distances us from close examination of what has not changed in society—or what has, which might not be for the better. Exploring and exploding these (mis)conceptions is essential to experience the benefits of a liberal education. (Fitchburg State University News)

In her concise and inexpensive booklet, Tracy first traces the daily relevance of medieval culture for her own discipline, the humanities, which study human beings over the course of time with a focus on our common humanity. She then tackles the relevance of academic engagement with the Middle Ages for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and for the Social Sciences,

with disability, diversity, domestic abuse, and health as representative areas of interest we share with our medieval forebears, regional, national, and global ones. Her embracing treatment unites aspects of medieval studies with medievalism, removes the barriers against the Middle Ages erected by common narratives of technological progress since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and values medieval practices against the broad panorama of their receptions, benign through abusive.

Even Tracy's embracing treatment, however, remains directed toward an academic audience and may therefore share the limited impact of most academic studies and of publications with ideologically predetermined audiences. What we need to develop, therefore, is the kind of medium that parses valid scholarship and research into entertaining narratives accessible to broad audiences who may otherwise learn about the medieval past only via the often-biased contemporary meme, game, and media cultures examined, among others, by Andrew Elliott, Brent Moberly, and Kevin Moberly.

Books, because of their enduring resilience as icons of cultural credibility and social authority, may still be an appropriate venue for this task, and Danièle Cybulskie's 2021 *How to Live Like a Monk: Medieval Wisdom for Modern Life* offers an example of the kind of publication that, together with video programs and podcasts, might bring about some of the change the reception of the Middle Ages in postmedieval times needs. The book, listed as one of their bestsellers by Abbeville Press, an independent New York publisher of fine art and illustrated books, combines the paratextual features of a convenient coffee table tome (handy 5.3 x 8.3-inch format, aesthetically pleasing cover art and design, numerous high-quality color illustrations) with the delegated scholarly authority of twelve pages of endnotes, five pages of glossary, and three pages of "Recommended Reading." Like Kisha Tracy's *Why Study the Middle Ages?*, it suspends the limiting historicizing sense of otherness when looking at the lives and practices of medieval monks and nuns and argues instead for the psychic continuity of human beings across time. It continues the format of question and answer from the title of the book into the text, asking (and answering) "Why become a monk," "How did a person become a monk," and "What did a monastery look like?" Later, Cybulskie comes through with her promise, made in the subtitle *Medieval Wisdom for Modern Life*, about how medieval monastic life may inspire contemporary readers in their own desire for peace, simplicity, and purpose.⁹

⁹ Focusing on topics like the mind-body dichotomy, the relevance of the divine in material existence, interpretations of death and how to cope with death, the pursuit of love in spiritual and earthly terms, and the significance of ideals like honor, the contributors to *Medieval Answers to Modern Problems* (2017) also try to flip the progressivist narrative governing views of the Middle Ages as dark and our own age as enlightened. However, this publication, too, will remain inaccessible because of its target audience and forbidding price tag.

The unusual achievement of this publication is that it presents a responsible and scholarship-based narrative of moderate historical difference within fascinating continuing human sameness. The book avoids simplistic inventions of ideological sameness and at the same time challenges scholarly claims of radical alterity between our own present and the medieval past.¹⁰ Even more, it centers on aspects of spirituality and religion, which are too often disregarded due to the radically secularist mentality governing contemporary academe, but were and are of great daily importance to a significant number of people in the medieval past as well as today.¹¹ Like the simultaneous continuity and temporal difference represented by the *Lord's Prayer*, Cybulskie's book retains the notion – admittedly with a slight tinge of originalist nostalgia – that our current culture has lost something while pursuing its inexorable *telos* of scientific progress and accelerated technological advance. However, it does so without advocating for a wholesale return to monasticism or some of the other features of medieval society that accompanied monastic life and were misappropriated in postmedieval times. *Si sic omnes!*

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¹⁰ These are the very qualities of one of the world's most popular sites for medievalia, *medievalists.net*, which, in 2022, had an audience of 4,170,011 and 7,077,314 page views (personal email from site owner Peter Konieczny, 12 April 2023). Danièle Cybulskie is a contributor to *medievalists.net*, and she engages medieval enthusiasts with *The Medieval Podcast*, a weekly show that has reached at least 1.5 million listeners worldwide since 2019.

¹¹ Cybulskie's choice of writing a popular book about monks, nuns, and monasteries could be viewed as a bold move when considering how aggressive some academic medievalists have been about any inclusion of spirituality and religion in medieval studies and medievalism studies. As Utz ("Of Monks") shows, such activist colleagues will launch social media attacks on anyone who does not submit to their narrow secularist ideological agenda. As a publication directed mostly toward non-academic audiences, *How to Live like a Monk* may simply have passed under their radar.

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