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Introduction

Valerie B. Johnson & Renée Ward

“Nothing lasts forever.” These words open “Same Old Scene,” one of the most popular songs by the British glam-rock-pop band Roxy Music (from their 1980 album *Flesh and Blood*). Although this song focuses on the pleasure-pain element of love relationships, the lyrics feel apt in the current moment (summer 2021), as we slowly emerge from eighteen months of various pandemic lockdowns and restrictions. Yet, as the crooning lover (Bryan Ferry’s dulcet tones) of the song also notes, “It’s still the same old movie that’s haunting me . . . The same old scene.” COVID-19 infections are again on the rise worldwide, and the full effect of vaccination programs have yet to be tested. People are nostalgic for the pre-pandemic days, “the before times,” eagerly awaiting a return to “normal,” yet simultaneously concerned about new variants spreading (at this writing: Delta) and so many people still unvaccinated. A return to the past is desired, but also feared: the climate is thus one of optimism tinged with pessimism. Medievalism stands at intersections: of nostalgia and history; of hope and realism.

We wrote the Introduction to *The Year’s Work in Medievalism* 33 (2018) in summer 2020 lockdowns, thinking that the next months would be less traumatic, hoping the pandemic and its impact would be fairly short-lived. That was not to be. The last year especially has been tumultuous, continually forcing us all to work and live outside of our comfort zones. Loss has and continues to be keenly felt by many, whether it be the loss of loved ones, of personal health (Long-COVID, anxiety, depression), economic hardships, or other forms of deprivation and insecurity. It seemed only fitting, then, that we open Issue 34 with “Maverick Medievalism,” a piece celebrating the late William Calin (1936-2018), whose career had a profound impact on the disciplines of medieval and medievalism studies. Although Bill passed before COVID-19 announced its presence globally, Richard Utz’s eulogy for him reminds us—as has the pandemic—about the importance of relationships in our personal and professional lives. Those of us who experienced Bill’s generosity, wit, and intellect are better scholars and people for it; those of us who never met him find his work an admirable monument.

The theme of Issue 34—Intersections—in some way reflects the shape of our world at present. Many of us have experienced, and, to some degree, will continue to experience “blended” work and learning environments, bringing both into our homes at a level previously unprecedented. We have become, as the UK higher education sector likes to put it, “adaptable,” shifting space, tools, and approach to the work we do, reinventing ourselves as scholars and teachers, as our context(s) evolves.

Adaptability and identity are likewise common threads in this issue. The articles that follow the eulogy for Bill Calin range from analyses of modern literary reimaginings of medieval figures such as Æthelred the ‘Unræd’ and Joan of Arc—finding redemption for traditionally maligned figures and connections to iconic ones in unexpected places—to explorations of gender and sexual identities and the effects (and affects) of trauma in adaptations of the Arthurian legend in text, graphic novels, music, and television. The Arthurian cluster also includes a “craft essay” in which the scholarly and creative endeavors intersect, demonstrating the often-symbiotic nature of the two practices. The volume concludes with another creative piece, one that returns us again to the theme of pandemic-related loss but with a comedic twist. A tongue-in-cheek dive into the world of medieval anchorites and anchoresses reminds us that the past year and a half has connected us to the Middle Ages in unexpected ways. Overall, then, the articles collected here demonstrate how medievalism bridges multiple traditional boundaries, whether of discipline, genre, historicism, medium, or mode. Medievalism offers intersections.

Issue 34 is also a transitional one for us, as we move the journal to a new digital home and start to build our catalogue of back-issues. We are starting to provide key-term lists for all of our issues, starting with Issue 34. These features are not yet ready, but, when done, we hope they will make our new archive more searchable and user-friendly. Watch for updates as we release new materials on the site.

We remain, as ever, grateful to our advisory board, our many peer readers, and our authors for their work on this issue. We owe particular thanks to Emily Leverett for her work liaising with the creative writers; to Carol Robinson and Scott Manning for their work on the journal’s new home; and to the Transitional Governance Committee of the International Society for the Study of Medievalism, for working to develop the Society’s first formal Constitution and Bylaws, and, in the process, renewing the relationship between ISSM and *The Year’s Work in Medievalism*.

Be well.

VBJ & RW
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