

Introduction

Memory is the matrix of all human temporal perception.

Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*¹

This book is a study of cultural memory in and of the British Middle Ages. It is about ways of knowing the past created by individuals and groups in medieval Britain and how those texts and images have been adapted and appropriated in the modern West. Like the medieval and modern material with which it works, this book's methodology is associative. It traces connections – often explicit, sometimes intuitive – across time, place and media to explore the temporal complexities of cultural production and subject formation. So while the methodology of this book is defined by historicist readings of the texts with which I work, this book is also a study of untimeliness, an investigation of cultural productions bereft of their original context.

The line drawn between the Middle Ages and modernity carries great cultural significance. For some critics it marks the birth of the individual,² for others the birth of the nation,³ for some the beginning of historical consciousness.⁴ As Margreta de Grazia writes, there is an 'exceptional force' to 'that secular divide' between medieval and modern which 'determines nothing less than relevance'.⁵ But exactly what prompted the break, and exactly when it occurred, is mysterious. Indeed, historians have offered numerous dates for the end of the Middle Ages. For Hans Blumenberg, the transition between the Middle Ages and modernity could be marked precisely with Petrarch's walk up Mont Ventoux on 22 April 1336, which he described as 'one of the great moments that oscillate indecisively between the epochs'.⁶ Jacob Burckhardt agreed that Petrarch was 'one of the first truly modern men'.⁷ Other possible dates include the discovery of the 'new world' in 1492; the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s; the end of the

Byzantine Empire in 1453; the death of Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485; and Stephen Greenblatt has recently offered the Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini's reading of Lucretius' poem *De rerum natura* in 1417.⁸ But there is little consensus beyond the fact that the Middle Ages did – at some point – end and that this break in time altered, somehow, human life and culture profoundly.

Visions and Ruins, however, examines continuities and connections as well as breaks and fractures. The scope of this book is determined by the duration of cultural forms rather than historical period. It explores some of the ways in which the presence of the Middle Ages has been felt, understood and perpetuated, as well as the cultural possibilities and transformations this has generated. It is prompted by the paradox that, on the one hand, Western modernity is predicated on the idea that the Middle Ages has passed and that the time of the medieval was somehow inferior, more barbaric and less civilised than modernity, while, on the other hand, modernity is characterised by continual returns of medieval cultural forms and conditioned by medieval institutions. The Middle Ages is therefore both inside and outside modernity, as both abjected other and necessary origin. The tensions of the paradox are expressed in the work of cultural memory, which records and perpetuates diverse and often contradictory ideas of the Middle Ages. *Visions and Ruins* traces some of the trajectories of cultural memories of the Middle Ages in the modern world, while at the same time exploring the production of cultural memory in the British Middle Ages. This double focus enables an examination of texts that may be separated by long stretches of time but which share desires, anxieties or sources alongside one another, in sometimes uneasy proximity. The texts we encounter in this book work creatively with time and history. They insist that the past might be, or become, present.

Structures of feeling and networks of memory

Definitions of cultural memory are necessarily broad and flexible, as the practices encompassed by it are multiple and diverse, but it does have what Jan Assmann terms 'fixed points'. As Assmann writes, 'These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).'⁹ Cultural memory is the realm in which communities come to terms with the past and remake it according to their

present needs. It forms part of what Raymond Williams calls a 'structure of feeling', a concept which draws attention to what he describes as 'meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt'. Similarly, to think about cultural memory is not to think about the past as history, that is, as a record of past events, but to think about how those past events are represented and experienced, understood and imagined. Part of the value of Williams' term lies in the fact that it brings together the individual and collective, the personal and the social, as it marks out a territory of shared knowledge and experience and gestures towards the historicity of such structures. As he writes, the phrase attempts to define 'a social experience that is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies'.¹⁰ Memory, too, is always personal and social. It is lived and learned, understood according to socially inscribed structures but always mediated by individual experience. So the productions of cultural memory in the Middle Ages encountered in this book range from poems, monuments and chronicles to political acts and rituals, while cultural memories of the Middle Ages range from 'common-sense' understandings of the medieval past as a place of violence and backwardness or a site of ideological purity, to private personal acts of devotion to a medieval event, individual or text, to public gatherings that use a medieval or medievalist site or monument as their locus.

Cultural memory depends on a desire to make the past present, but how exactly that is achieved and what the results of that work are, is by no means predictable.¹¹ In his essay 'The Return of the Middle Ages', which has become a foundational piece of work in medievalism studies, Umberto Eco recognised the diversity inherent in the idea of the Middle Ages and offered a taxonomy that identified what he called 'ten little Middle Ages', including the 'barbaric', the 'romantic', the 'philological' and the 'decadent'.¹² Eco's paradigm is productive but, over the course of this book, I do not seek to rationalise, limit or generalise the diverse meanings attributed to or generated by engagement with medieval culture. Instead I attempt to locate productions of 'the medieval' within contemporary structures of feeling. The category of 'the Middle Ages' invites generalisation because it is itself a generalisation and invites oversimplification because it is itself an oversimplification, but the differences between expressions of 'medievalness' matter,

as Eco recognised. With this in mind, I draw comparisons tentatively and seek instead to initiate conversations between texts. The texts I read alongside one another constitute networks of memory and reveal the transfer and transformation of ideas, desires and anxieties. I read my texts not as straightforwardly evocative of a particular time and place, but as embedded in historical process and discourse in diverse and multiple ways, as part of the structures of feeling that define, and are defined by, particular moments in history, but with the potential to move and belong in and across different historical moments. Therefore, I understand the historicity of the texts with which I work to be mutually constitutive, rather than determined by habits of periodisation. As I trace exchanges between texts in this expanded temporal field, I follow Maura Nolan's suggestion that 'relationships between and among epochs must be understood as multiple, with many temporalities at work in a single age'.¹³ As we will see, while iterations of the Middle Ages are always informed by the precise context of their production, in the same historical moment it is possible to find contradictory representations of the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages, as the plural noun suggests, is always multiple. Western modernity, in contrast, as Amitav Ghosh notes, is characterised by 'enormous intellectual commitment to the promotion of its supposed singularity'.¹⁴ The texts with which I work are ambivalent and inconsistent.¹⁵ They initiate conversations in as well as across time and generate ideas of the future as well as ideas of the past.

Medieval futures

For Jacques Derrida, memory is best understood not as an engagement with the past but as an attempt to fashion the future. He writes that, 'Memory stays with traces, in order to "preserve" them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which themselves occupy the form of presence and always remain, as it were, to come – come from the future, from the *to come*'.¹⁶ According to Derrida's thinking, memory is creative rather than representative and 'projects itself toward the future' rather than the past.¹⁷ The Italian historian and philosopher Boncompagno da Signa made a similar point in his *Rhetorica novissima*, completed in 1235, when he wrote that 'Memory is a glorious and wonderful gift of nature, by which we recall the past, comprehend the present, and contemplate the future'.¹⁸ For both Derrida and da Signa, memory is an instrument by which we navigate time, a means of fashioning the future.

It is dynamic, subjective and creative. This book explores some of the ways in which cultural memory constitutes, in Derrida's phrase, 'the presence of the present' in the Middle Ages and how those works of memory have been perpetuated and transformed. As I examine representations of the past in the Middle Ages and their continuing presence at later moments, I reveal how works of memory draw people as well as temporal moments together, define personal and collective identities, and mark some people, places and times as alien.

Of course, the Middle Ages is itself often characterised as Western modernity's other. Elizabeth Scala and Sylvia Federico, for instance, argue that it is 'the necessity of the Middle Ages, of the idea of the medieval, that makes a very discourse of modernity possible'.¹⁹ As Andrew James Johnston explains, this means that 'the Middle Ages does not precede modernity but becomes the effect of a certain self-construction of the modern, which gives itself identity by delimiting a "before" that is everything the modern is not'.²⁰ The structures of modernity rest upon the idea of the Middle Ages. For instance, one of the most influential critical formulations of memory studies, Pierre Nora's groundbreaking theorisation of 'lieux de mémoire' (sites of memory), depends upon a developmental narrative that positions 'hopelessly forgetful modern societies' against a simpler pre-industrial pre-modern world in which there was some sort of natural connection between people and their past.²¹ Nora writes of 'the irrevocable break marked by the disappearance of peasant culture, that quintessential repository of collective memory' and claims that, 'Such a fundamental collapse of memory is but one familiar example of a movement toward democratization and mass culture on a global scale.' For Nora, the 'lieux de mémoire' of modernity are but a pale imitation of the premodern 'milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory'.²² Nora's analysis of cultural memory relies on a nostalgic vision of the Middle Ages as a simpler 'before', without the alienation and complexity of modernity.²³

Because of the complex discursive work the idea of the Middle Ages is put to, it is very difficult to situate it in a singular and stable moment in time. The Middle Ages, to use Raymond Williams' words again, is always 'still *in process*', even as it is taken to be fixed, still and monolithic. This is a point made eloquently by Michael Camille in his study of the gargoyles of Notre Dame. Camille argued that it is impossible to view 'the art of the Middle Ages without looking past and through the nineteenth century'

and went on to suggest that the complex chronologies of medieval material ‘should not preclude our wanting to understand the Middle Ages as a distinct historical period; we find, however, that it is hardly ever as distinct or as separate as we might want to think, but always flowing into other periods, haunting other epochs, emerging where we least expect it, in romanticism, surrealism, and even postmodernity’.²⁴ Encounters with medieval culture are always mediated. While formations of medievalist cultural memory are often characterised by an idea of the realness, stillness, distance and difference of the Middle Ages – as in, for instance, Camille’s example of romanticism – there is no way to access a pure, real, enduring Middle Ages. The presence of the Middle Ages in modernity is defined by its diversity, its cultural and temporal complexity.

Camille’s thoughts echo important aspects of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s work on historiography. Chakrabarty unpicks developmentalist views of history and argues that all times are necessarily plural, that different cultures and societies have their own unique and productive ways of organising time, as he reveals the political foundations of totalising models of history. Chakrabarty uses the term ‘time-knots’, derived from the Bengali word ‘shomoy-granhi’, to describe how people, cultural productions and societies are able to resolve apparent contradictions between past and present. Chakrabarty writes:

It is because we already have experience of that which makes the present noncontemporaneous with itself that we can actually historicize. Thus what allows historians to historicize the medieval or the ancient is the very fact these worlds are never completely lost. We inhabit their fragments even when we classify ourselves as modern and secular. It is because we live in time-knots that we can undertake the exercise of straightening out, as it were, some part of the knot.²⁵

Camille and Chakrabarty offer ways to think through how the signifiers of the past become ‘the presence of the present’, but also how various pasts are threaded through each temporal moment. How, in Geraldine Heng’s terms, ‘*the past* can *also* be non-identical to itself, inhabited too by that which was out of its time’.²⁶ The work of memory is always of both the past and the present. Similarly, acts of medievalist cultural memory are defined by the movement of cultural forms through and across time. It is always of the present and also noncontemporaneous. It is always untimely.

Cultural memory and the untimely Middle Ages

While ‘untimely’ may suggest a lack, fault or deficiency, I read it, with Elizabeth Grosz, as potential. As Grosz writes, glossing Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘The untimely is that which is strong enough, active enough, to withstand the drive of the present to similarity, resemblance, or recognition.’²⁷ This is the Middle Ages that is encountered in this book, urgent rather than out of date, a site of cultural potential rather than stasis, a means of imagining the future as well as imaging the past. The untimely is not without, or outside, history, however. In Alexander Nagel’s words, ‘History is effective and real, even as chronology is bent and folded.’²⁸ As Carolyn Dinshaw has demonstrated, a focus on the transhistorical attachments and radical temporalities of medieval and medievalist texts reveals what she describes as ‘a heterogeneous *now* in which the divide between living and dead, material and immaterial, reality and fiction, present and past is unsettled’.²⁹ Attention to the flows and knots which define medievalist texts emphasises the complex interactions between temporality, history and memory which define subject formation.³⁰ It reveals that although cultural productions may be embedded in historical process, this does not mean they can be limited to a single historical context. While a text may be defined according to modern habits of periodisation, it may also offer new ways of understanding the past.

In her study of artistic influence and tradition, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*, Mieke Bal uses the term ‘historical attitude’ to describe the ways in which the visual artworks she examines speak to and with the Baroque.³¹ Similarly, I do not suggest that the texts examined in *Visions and Ruins* are representative of a particular period, style or genre, but rather a mode of thinking, an attitude, which is at once historically situated and insistent that the connections which can be created or detected between past and present matter. Like Bal’s work, *Visions and Ruins* ‘attempts to trace the process of meaning-production over time (in both directions: present/past and past/present) as an open, dynamic process, rather than to map the results of that process’.³² This means that *Visions and Ruins* presents a discontinuous, nonlinear history that moves across as well as through time as it traces the constellations that form, and which have formed around, the medieval and medievalist texts it examines. The duration of cultural forms – and the manner in which the meanings of those forms alter according to their context – is the central organising

principle of this book rather than historical period. By emphasising duration rather than period I am able to recognise some of the breadth and diversity of the archive of the Middle Ages.

The four chapters of this book each revolve around a single vehicle of cultural memory. Chapter 1 examines the image of the ruin, Chapter 2 takes public monuments as its focus, Chapter 3 the idea of the nation and Chapter 4 interrogates representations of the body. Each chapter is structured around a close reading of a medieval text or group of texts and works out from that material to interrogate how it represents the past and how it has been used in or speaks to modern representations of the Middle Ages. Chapter 1 focuses on the Old English poem *The Ruin*, a text that meditates upon the material remains of a long-passed civilisation and has often been read as typical of the nostalgic poetry of the Anglo-Saxons. The poem is commonly taken to be a depiction of early medieval Bath and, as I examine the ideas of time, memory and history that the poem presents, I analyse what its disciplinary history can reveal about the desires and practices of modern critics as well as of the poem itself. *The Ruin* is a 'time-knot' that brings together the Roman and the Anglo-Saxon, the medieval and, in its continuing life as a read, studied and translated text, the modern. The poem's interest in how the signifiers of the past are incorporated in the present and its thoughtful, playful and purposeful engagement with chronology and temporality allow me to frame the ideas of time, history and networks of cultural memory which will be elucidated in the remainder of the book. I contextualise the historical attitude I detect in *The Ruin* by examining the image of the ruin in various early and late medieval texts and, developing this analysis, interrogate the distinctions and contradictions between historicist analysis and the logic of periodisation. My reading also takes account of the translation history of *The Ruin*. While a great deal of work has been done in the past few years on the creative histories of Old English literature, *The Ruin* has largely escaped critics' attention and the work that has been done has focused on poetic and literary translation and appropriation.³³ By examining the two dominant strands of this history side by side, that is, scholarly and poetic translation, I seek not to play one off the other but to reveal the interaction and interdependence of the two traditions and the complex networks of influence that define the twentieth- and twenty-first-century existence of Old English texts. As I demonstrate, even the most experimental version of *The Ruin* of the twentieth century – Peter Reading's 'Fragmentary' – was written

under the influence of the work of Michael Alexander, author of the canonical *Earliest English Poems* and holder of the Berry Chair of English Literature at the University of St Andrews. Similarly, when the filmmaker Julien Temple used *The Ruin* to illustrate images of the post-industrial ruins of Detroit he adapted the work of Siân Echard, a professor at the University of British Columbia. Here, and throughout *Visions and Ruins*, history and memory brush up against one another in productive and provocative contact.

These examples demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between the academy and the artist. Throughout this book I make distinctions between what I label ‘creative’ and ‘critical’ responses to medieval culture. Broadly, I categorise works as critical if they claim to offer insight or access into medieval material, while the work I categorise as creative takes a self-conscious step away from the medieval and can be understood and appreciated without reference to the medieval material with which it engages. The distinctions between the work of Reading and Temple on the one hand, and Alexander and Echard on the other, illustrate the distance between these practices. However, it is easy to overstate the differences between these works and the distinctions are not always clear: critical work is not without creative value and creative work is not necessarily without critical insight.³⁴ I therefore use the term ‘medievalist’ to describe work that takes an interest in medieval culture without making claims regarding intent, skill or knowledge. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests, as a noun ‘medievalist’ designates someone who shows ‘sympathy’ to the medieval.³⁵ As I use it as an adjective, it suggests a similar emotional or intellectual engagement. The medievalist material we encounter in *Visions and Ruins* ranges from Thomas Gray’s Pindaric Ode to the Cædmon Memorial, from E. M. Barry’s Victorian Eleanor Cross to Michael Landy’s kinetic sculptures of medieval saints. While all these works can be understood and appreciated without detailed knowledge of the medieval material with which they work, I suggest they nevertheless offer rich insights into aspects of medieval culture and how the medieval has been defined and understood in the postmedieval world.

Developing the ideas of appropriation, translation and networks of influence outlined in the opening chapter, Chapter 2 unpicks the medieval and modern histories of the Eleanor Crosses, the memorials erected by Edward I following the death of his wife Eleanor of Castile in November 1290. While the crosses might be read with Nora as ‘sites of memory’, they did not and do not

provide uncomplicated access to the past. Examining the ideas of time and history created by the monuments and interrogating their social and political contexts, I argue that the crosses create a cultural memory of Eleanor attuned to national and racial fantasies and heavily invested in ideas of religious and secular authority. As I trace the cultural histories of the crosses, however, I also outline the fluctuations of cultural memory and the complexities and contradictions of the idea of the Middle Ages in early modern and Victorian Britain. Over their long history, the Eleanor Crosses have been celebrated, abjected and ignored. Their non-linear history records a range of invented histories of the Middle Ages, even as it marks out one trajectory of its reception. As Eric Hobsbawm suggested in his work on the invention of tradition, the Eleanor Crosses are a complex historical phenomenon that offer only a pre-mediated connection with the past and only establish their meaning and authority through their repetition.³⁶ As with *The Ruin*, it is the repetitions and reiterations of the Eleanor Crosses that constitute their ability to offer continuity with the past. Their meanings, and their locations within contemporary structures of feeling, have fluctuated dramatically, but I argue that this lack of a stable essence or singular, continuing, meaning reveals their cultural value rather than undermines it.

Chapter 3 develops the tension between essence and effect and continuity and rupture to explore what I term 'medievalist double consciousness'. In their study of medieval historiography, Paul Freedman and Gabrielle Spiegel used the term 'dual consciousness' to explain the manner in which the Middle Ages signifies as both 'a place and time of non-origin (that is, the dark period constructed in and by the Renaissance) and that of origin (the origin of the modern state)'.³⁷ The dual consciousness of medievalist work is well demonstrated by the Eleanor Crosses and *The Ruin*, which both show how medieval and medievalist cultural productions can speak simultaneously of past and present, as other and subject, non-origin and origin. Freedman and Spiegel's phrase carries a rich and suggestive echo of W. E. B Du Bois' concept 'double consciousness', a term he coined to speak of the experience of black people in the USA and Europe who found themselves at once inside and outside Western culture.³⁸ While Freedman and Spiegel's term reveals how 'the medieval' is often figured as simultaneously inside and outside modernity, their echo of Du Bois' thinking encourages an examination of the way medieval studies and medievalist structures of feeling speak to racial

and ethnic, as well as historical and cultural, origins. In a marked difference to Du Bois' original thinking, medievalist double consciousness is projected rather than directly experienced and felt. It is a means of producing difference, a way of creating and describing a problem, an act of bad faith that marks some bodies, people, practices or institutions as not quite belonging in either the past or the present. This is never more powerfully expressed, as Patrick Geary, Reginald Horsman, Clare Simmons and others have demonstrated, than in discourses of nationhood.³⁹ Because the idea of the Middle Ages relies on a sense of closure, despite its endless reiterations, medievalist thinking is a powerful means of closing down the possibilities of the future, of marking feared or undesired aspects of the contemporary as non-contemporary, as being out of time.

In the third chapter, then, I explore a group of texts by the English poet Thomas Gray, the Hungarian poet János Arany, the Icelandic scholar Grímur Jonsson Thorkelín and the Danish poet, historian and educator Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig that exhibit medievalist double consciousness as they engage and promote ideas of the nation. As well as their interest in the nation, the texts share a fascination with the figure of the public poet, or bard. As I demonstrate, Gray's 1757 poem 'The Bard' sits at the centre of modern perceptions of premodern bards. Like the Ossian poems circulated by James MacPherson from 1760, Gray's bard is an invention, a figure of cultural memory that expressed a fantasy of wholeness and exclusion. I trace the influence of Gray's bard in Britain and Europe, across creative and critical works produced during the nineteenth century, to explore how medievalist cultural memory operates in tandem with nationalist thinking. In these texts, the idea of the Middle Ages functions less as a marker of historical time than a means of producing difference. The network of memory established by Gray's poem engages medieval culture as well as modern and, in order to unpick the constructed pasts of the bards, I frame my discussion with an examination of a performative act of cultural memory by Edward I and Eleanor of Castile that speaks eloquently to Gray's text and reveals one example of how historical and social difference was produced in late thirteenth-century England. As in the previous chapters, the material encountered in Chapter 3 reveals shared concerns across time. It explores how ideas of the past are used to generate ideas of community and exclude some people, ideas and traditions from the future.

Unlike the first three chapters, Chapter 4 does not follow a chronological order. Instead, discussions of medieval and modern works are woven together to unpick conversations among texts, in and through time. This chapter is prompted by two twenty-first-century pieces of art: Elizabeth Price's immersive video installation *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* (2012) and Michael Landy's *Saints Alive* (2013). Both of these works turn to medieval culture in order to examine the untimeliness of the body and in this chapter I trace their sources and explore how their work speaks with, and to, medieval representations of the body. The chapter begins with a study of a group of thirteenth-century martial effigies that feature in Price's film and goes on to use the Middle English poem *St Erkenwald* to explore Landy's interest in hagiography.

The effigies insist on the continuing presence of the body while there is a palpable anxiety throughout *St Erkenwald* about the unknowability of the past, the unreliability of memory and the unresolvable contradictions that exist between past and present. Price and Landy both engage productively with these concerns and, like the medieval texts that define their work, explore intratemporal connections through the movement of the human body. My reading of these works is informed by Aby Warburg's work on gesture in early modern art.⁴⁰ Warburg investigated gestures as, in Giorgio Agamben's words, 'a crystal of historical memory',⁴¹ and unpicked the times, histories, memories, desires and beliefs contained in their representation. While *St Erkenwald* and the effigies privilege similarity, Price and Landy work hard to allow the difference of the past – and different readings of the past – to flourish rather than become subsumed in the present and acknowledge that the past, like the future, is potential. The thirteenth-century effigies, however, offer a powerful account of the continuing presence of the body that defies traditional habits of periodisation. This chapter takes the desires of the effigies seriously and explores the consequences of allowing the untimely to structure thought.

The texts I investigate in this book reveal the Middle Ages to be a complex assemblage: a period of history, a cultural category, a way of being and a way of doing, but also a way of forgetting, because to mark something as medieval can be to mark it as uncivilised, undeveloped, undesirable, naïve, irrelevant and unworthy of attention. The Middle Ages can be, as Theodor Adorno suggested

of modernity, 'a qualitative, not a chronological, category',⁴² and the archive of the Middle Ages is defined by its diversity rather than its consistency. This book attempts to recognise some of that diversity and map some of the diverse work cultural memory is put to in the Middle Ages and modernity. Medieval culture is open and relational. It is not merely a resource but a means of structuring cultural practice and knowledge, a way of defining, and undermining, habits and assumptions. So while ideas of gender, race, sex, politics, power and culture are always embedded in the idea of the Middle Ages, they are not stable. Rather, they are constituted differently in different structures of feeling and in each formation and communication of cultural memory. The texts encountered in this book demonstrate exchanges of cultural energy and influence between past and present but also offer new ways of knowing the medieval past and the contemporary moment.

Notes

- 1 Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 238.
- 2 See David Aers, 'A whisper in the ear of Early Modernists; or, reflections on literary critics writing the "History of the Subject"', in David Aers (ed.), *Culture and History, 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), pp. 177–202.
- 3 See 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.
- 4 See Lee Paterson, 'On the margin: Postmodernism, ironic history, and medieval studies', *Speculum* 65 (1990), 87–108.
- 5 Margreta de Grazia, 'The modern divide: From either side', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007), 453–67, p. 453.
- 6 Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 341. See further Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith (eds), *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
- 7 Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 193.
- 8 Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: The Bodley Head, 2011). See also the essays collected in 'Book review forum: *The Swerve: How the World became Modern*', *Exemplaria* 25 (2013), 313–70 and Laura Saetveit Miles, 'The ethics of

- inventing modernity: Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve*, *In the Middle*, 30 May 2016, www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/05/the-ethics-of-inventing-modernity.html, accessed 24 October 2017. For a survey of the problems and possibilities of periodisation see Elizabeth A. R. Brown, 'On 1500', in Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson (eds), *The Medieval World* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 691–710; Eric Hayot, 'Against periodization; Or, on institutional time', *New Literary History* 42 (2011) 739–56; David Matthews, 'Periodization', in Marion Turner (ed.), *A Handbook of Middle English Studies* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 253–66; Ted Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered: Historical Contrast and the Prestige of English Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); and the essays collected in David Matthews and Gordon McMullan (eds), *Reading the Medieval in Early Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Jennifer Summit and David Wallace (eds), 'Medieval/Renaissance: After periodization', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007).
- 9 Jan Assmann, 'Collective memory and cultural identity', *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 125–33, p. 129. On cultural memory studies see Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara B. Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). On medieval cultural memory see Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Elma Brenner, Meredith Cohen and Mary Franklin-Brown (eds), *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).
- 10 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 132.
- 11 On the performative nature of memory see Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik, 'Performing memory in art and popular culture: An introduction', in Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik (eds), *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1–23, p. 3. For a similar definition of memory practice in medieval contexts see Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.
- 12 Umberto Eco, 'The return of the Middle Ages', in *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 61–85. See further Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul (eds), *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013); David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015);

- and Louise D'Arcens (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2016).
- 13 Maura Nolan, 'Historicism after historicism', in Elizabeth Scala and Sylvia Federico (eds), *The Post-Historical Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 63–86, p. 67.
 - 14 Amativ Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 103.
 - 15 See Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 81, where he writes that no text 'can be temporally self-consistent'.
 - 16 Jacques Derrida, 'The art of memories', in *Mémoires: For Paul de Man*, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler and Eduardo Cadava (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 45–88, p. 58. Emphasis in the original.
 - 17 Derrida, 'The art of memories', p. 57.
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