

Graham A. Loud, Martial Staub (ed.), *The Making of Medieval History*, Woodbridge (The Boydell Press) 2017, XVI–240 p., 20 b/w ill., ISBN 978-1-903153-70-3, GBP 25,00.

rezensiert von | compte rendu rédigé par
K. Patrick Fazioli, Dobbs Ferry

The first lesson of historiography is that the writing of history is always as much about the present as the past; or, as Walter Benjamin once put it, »every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.« This volume is a welcome addition to a growing body of scholarship that explores how Europe's Middle Ages have been continually reinvented to serve an array of modern political and ideological agendas. Most of the chapters are based on invited lectures given at the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield, and York in 2011 and 2012, and are penned by an impressive line-up of medieval scholars from Britain, Continental Europe, and North America. Following some introductory remarks by editors Graham Loud and Martial Staub, who make the case for the continued relevance of the Middle Ages to the (post)modern world, the book is divided into five sections, each containing two or three thematically-linked essays.

In Part One, Jinty Nelson and Ian Wood offer a pair of historiographical essays. Nelson's chapter begins with a sympathetic rereading of Norman Cantor's »Inventing the Middle Ages« before giving some personal reflections on the interdisciplinary direction of medieval scholarship in recent years. Wood's contribution analyzes five nineteenth-century novels set during the Early Middle Ages. He points out that these literary works were grounded in meticulous historical scholarship and argues that this genre allowed authors like François-René de Chateaubriand and W. Collins to advance their particular interpretations of the past to a wide audience.

The essays in the second section lay at the intersection of identity, politics, and the medieval past. Patrick Geary investigates why ethnicity has long been regarded as the primary basis of sovereignty and nationhood in Europe. After considering the possible influence of Christianity, barbarian political identity, and the early medieval sources, Geary ultimately places blame on eighteenth and nineteenth-century historians who flattened the complex social identities of the post-Roman world into a single ethnic dimension that served their nationalist agenda. In the next chapter, Michael Borgolte uses the lens of comparative and global history to reevaluate the geographical boundaries of medieval Europe. Challenging the concept of Latin Christendom, Borgolte sees continuous conflict and cultural exchange among Christianity, Islam, and Judaism as the defining characteristic of the medieval west.

The third section contains three case studies on the political appropriation of the medieval past in Central Europe. Bastian Schlüter details how nineteenth-century German nationalists positioned their newly-unified state as the heir to the medieval Ottonian and



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée
par l'Institut historique allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Hohenstaufen dynasties, best exemplified in the popular legend of Frederick Barbarossa sleeping in the Kyffhäuser mountain, awaiting the German empire to be resurrected. Joep Leerssen further investigates the intersection of nationalism and medievalism in nineteenth-century Germany with an iconographic analysis of murals painted during the restoration of the twelfth-century Goslar Kaiserpfalz. The Romantic scenes intermingled the medieval and modern, as well as history and myth, in order to trace a direct line from Charlemagne and Barbarossa to the present-day Hohenzollern dynasty (while conveniently omitting the intervening centuries of Habsburg rule). In the third case study, Bernhard Jussen continues the focus on visual culture, providing a comparative analysis of images of Charles the Great in French and German schoolbooks, postcards, and other popular media. He identifies some striking patterns in how each nation portrayed the early medieval emperor: the French Charlemagne was typically depicted as a Romanized emperor, faithful Catholic, feudal lord of his loyal paladin Roland, and (somewhat unexpectedly) the founder of the secular school system. In contrast, the German Karl der Grosse was a fierce Frankish warrior, a sceptic of papal power, and never associated with the Roland legend.

The fourth section presents two case studies on the frontiers of the medieval Europe. Richard Hitchcock reviews the modern historiographical debates over tenth-century Iberia, which largely concern the contribution of Islamic culture to modern Spain. While traditional nationalist historians regarded the Reconquista as the key moment in Spanish history, others have embraced Américo Castro's idea of *convivencia*, which emphasized the mutually beneficial relationship of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Middle Ages. Christian Lübke's essay brings us to the German-Slavic borderlands on the eastern end of the Carolingian empire. While modern historians have often been guilty of projecting their own ethnic antagonisms onto an early medieval past where such fixed identities did not exist, Lübke prefers to characterize this region »Germania Slavica«, a term that (like *convivencia*) presumes intercultural cooperation as well as conflict.

The essays in the fifth and final section address some crucial theoretical questions through the lens of religious identity and practice. Christine Caldwell Ames examines how concepts like »inquisition« and »heresy« fit into broader disciplinary debates about the nature of medieval alterity. She turns to an unexpected pair of examples — the early American medievalist Henry Charles Lea and mid-century French revolutionaries known as the Situationists — to illustrate how understandings of medieval religion are deeply entangled with the uneasy place of religious belief in a secularized modernity. In the last chapter, Peter Biller traces the shifting meanings of »religio«, »laity«, and »heretic« to remind historians of the semantic gap when translating religious vocabularies between ancient, medieval, and modern contexts.

The overall quality of the scholarship in these essays is exceptionally high. As one would hope from such a distinguished group of scholars, the writing sparkles with wit and insights throughout. The volume will surely prove a worthwhile read not only for medievalists, but anyone interested in how the past is made to serve the needs of the present. Yet if



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée
par l'Institut historique allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

one complaint could be levelled, it is that the book would have benefitted from a concluding commentary that could have explicitly tied together some of the shared themes and concerns interwoven throughout the diverse essays. To take but one example, there is an underlying tension between those (like Nelson) who cheer the continual »reinvention« of the Middle Ages and those (like Geary) concerned with the dangers of appropriating the medieval past for contemporary agendas. In other words, how does the historian make her work relevant to present »concerns« (to borrow Benjamin's word) without committing the fallacy of presentism? To be fair, the editors' Introduction touches upon some of these big questions, but a final essay that brought the chapters into greater dialogue would have delivered a more intellectually satisfying conclusion to an otherwise rich and rewarding book.

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

DOI:
[10.11588/frrec.2018.1.45561](https://doi.org/10.11588/frrec.2018.1.45561)

Seite | page 3

Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée
par l'Institut historique allemandPubliziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)