



Why Medieval/Fantasy? Bridging the Gap in the Parenthesis

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1. Fact Sheet

Why Medieval/Fantasy?

2025

Lecture performance and installation

Video Studio K-317

Performance dates: 24.5.2025, 28.5.2025, 07.6.2025 & 10.6.2025

Agilulf

2025

Sculptural performance costume

Steel, leather, rivets, polylactid acid, pieces of a safety harness

Kuva/Tila

Morning star & Evening star

2025

Aluminum cast

Kuva/Tila

Exhibited at Kuvan Kevät 17.5-15.6.2025.

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2. Abstract

This written component of my thesis consists of the documentation and thematic breakdown of my lecture performance and installation work *Why Medieval/Fantasy?*.

Why Medieval/Fantasy? is the combined work of a lecture performance and an installation. It was exhibited at the MFA show Kuvan Kevät 2025 at The Academy of Fine Arts of Uniarts Helsinki during the spring of 2025. The lecture performance was held a total of four times during the exhibition period of 17.5-15.6.2025 at the Video Studio space K-317 in The Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki. The full runtime of the performance was 50 minutes, its presentation language was English and an in-advance sign-up was required to attend.

In the main gallery space Kuva/Tila of the academy, the sculptural performance costume *Agilulf* and the performance props *Morning star & Evening star* were exhibited as an installation alongside PLA curb spikes and scraps of waste generated in their making process. Integrated to the installation were also information leaflets about the performance, on its dates and on how to sign up.

Central to the thematic breakdown is arguing a link between the prevalence of neo-medievalism in the 21st century, technofeudalism within late-stage capitalism, the rapid digitalization of our modes of information production, the Gutenberg Parenthesis and the ways medieval history has been co-opted for fascist ends.

At a particularly focal point is elaborating on queer and especially trans medieval history, and the long process of historical obfuscation that has led to various marginalized groups being denied coevalness with their contemporaries.

3. Prologue

I want to give an immediate foreword of the unfortunate fact that everything I would like to go into, cannot realistically fit within the given length limitations of the written thesis. This written component does elaborate on the works artistic ambitions and purposes, and ideally a sizable portion of the following would've been included in the performance script and the audience and I'd sat patiently through an hour more of performance script.

There are however topics like the attitudes throughout the medieval period towards the Crusades, the widespread exchange of knowledge between Christian and Islamic academics, medieval notions of colourism, racism and xenophobia and the multitude of quite complicated and throughout the period evolving ideas about gender and sexuality that have had to stay as surface scrapes but that regardless hold an integral importance to the topic, and that I'd like to elaborate further at a later time. I also wasn't able to delve into the eco-fascist movement, or its Celtic history co-opt and how it links to the manufacturing of an antithesis to modernity at large.

I have endeavoured to give succinct descriptions of each key topic and theme but would wholeheartedly recommend the given sources and extended bibliography to those that are further interested.

I would also like to preface the text by stating clearly that I am not a historian, nor possess special qualifications that'd allow me a voice of authority in the field of history studies. However, I've done my utmost to apply a wide variety of reputable sources from a wide selection of academic disciplines during my working process.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank all my friends who've patiently listened to my medievalist enthusiasm and supported me in my weakest moments during this process. Especially thank you to Helena Pulkkinen, Ramina Habibollah, Casimir Bogdanov, Lina Herrmans and Ida Stenros.

I would also like to thank my advisors Camille Auer and Mikko Kuorinki for the fruitful spring. James Prevett for facilitating the casting process, and my fellow students who were also integral to the process. Vesa Rahikainen for his technical support and encouragement. Matti Salonen for all his help and instruction with preparing the performance space. Nina Liebenberg for her unwavering

dedication to the curatorial process, her help and comments. Vincent Roumagnac and Meri Linna for especially inspiring studio visits.



Photo by Ida Stenros.

4. An Introduction to the Performance

Chivalry is not dead; the performance begins by my armour-clad self holding the entrance door open to usher in the waiting audience. Upon entering there's a brief moment for the viewer to take in the dimly lit space, where a softly backlit anvil holds the combined set of *Morning star & Evening star*, and on a presentation screen my desktop background depicting a distant castle silhouette washes a tech filled table with a faint light. Once everyone has entered, the door shuts behind me as I creak and rattle on to the stage, plunging the room into further darkness.

This lecture performance *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* narrates through a complicated process of trying to understand modern medieval desires, queer medieval history and the processes of historical obfuscation that have led to the current rise of neo-medieval rhetoric and aesthetics. It's about grappling to secure oneself a place in the past, about holding together an empty suit of armour. About *pure mettle*.

The performance progresses through stages of autotheoretical narration, lecture format and a hypnagogic sonic interlude of movement choreography. During the autotheoretical sections,

descriptions of my research period consisting of meetings with contemporary medievalist practitioners (blacksmiths, jousters, historians, etc.), of getting familiarized with forging, of queer and general medieval history studies and of on-site research get tangled together with moments of auto-fictive fantasies. Spurred, by an experience of parallelity with the fictitious story of Sir Agilulf (Italo Calvino, *The Nonexistent Knight*), when having had attempted to contextualize a queer position within the European Middle Ages.

Coming from the door, I carefully side-step a pile of tiny white curb spikes lying at the centre of the space as I make my way to the control table. There, as I adjust the lights, like I'll be doing throughout the evening, my eyes sweep one last time over the sound system and my laptop, before I take a stand squarely across from the audience.

Beyond the poor vision of my helmets visor the audience begins to blur away, and my voice to carry over the constant rumble of my armour. Now as I'm writing, the moment eerily reminds me of jousting knights, who half blinded by their pin-thin viewports fumble the lances out of their squires' hold before the beginning of a show-at-arms.

The structure of the performance drifts from monologue, to presenting video and photos and back to monologue. The space stays relatively unchanged, except for the lighting that transitions between scenes. At one point the small pile of curb spikes gets scattered across the room with a kick, dotting the dark floor with constellations of sharp, white points.

There's an interim of a sonic sequence where the soundscape of the armour is escalated by a movement choreography, getting superimposed by the live sound going through a granular synthesizer and creating a texturally heightened soundscape that emphasizes movement. The armour creates a cacophony of soft tings and loud screeches as steel plates drag across one another.

Bold swings along stilted thrusts of the *Morning star* send motion throughout the whole body of steel. A microphone picks up the low frequencies born from the momentum of the swings, and consequently bathes the space in a rumble through the subwoofers. During these movements the forementioned curb spikes get trampled over and violently crushed, and their crackle and squeaking gets mixed with the delicate clicking picked up by the microphone from the individual joints of the armoured gauntlets.

Once the movements cease, there is a shift in the atmosphere. Thus far in the sequence the audience has sat disregarded, now I turn to directly face the audience. Speaking into the mic, what is first unintelligible becomes less so, I crash into a kneel before the audience and my words gain clarity;

“Hail Saint Marinos, Hail Saint Marinos. Make sure my conquest is bountiful and safe, and that I’ll find my siblings where I left them. Hail Saint Marinos, Hail Saint Marinos. Protect me morning star, and hold the day together with evening. Hail Saint Marinos.”

Excerpt from the *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* Script.

With one last ‘*protect me morning star*’, the mace is connected back together with the *Evening star* on the anvil. ‘*And hold the day together with evening*’.

The lights are turned back up, and the lecture continues.



Picture taken during the sonic interlude. Photo by Ida Stenros.

Details on space & tech

The video studio space K-317 where the performance was held, was essentially transformed into a black box for the duration of the exhibition. The space spans around 50m² and is the only space in the Mylly building with DMX controllable lights and dark wall curtains that span the whole room.

For the purposes of the performance a 100" presentation screen and a genelec speaker system accompanied by two subwoofers was brought into the space. Slightly right from the presentation screen, sat a table holding my laptop, soundcard, mic and the DMX control table.

Placed on the right side of the space was an iron anvil secured to a wooden elevation. For the most part of the performance the props *Morning star & Evening star* were placed on top of it, though throughout monologue sections pertaining to forging and weaponry, it was also used as a seat and a lean.

5. The Installation

Outside of the performance and rehearsal times, the armour and the mace props were installed in the Kuva/Tila gallery space. Dubbed as a sculptural performance costume, the steel armour-set is titled *Agilulf*, after the focal character of *The Nonexistent knight*, and the aluminium cast weapon props as *Evening star & Morning star*.

Within the gallery space the armour-set exists as an unassuming, inactivated object. The scattered placement suggests at temporality, and at a glance it nods toward object abandonment. A more calculated placement structure and an impression of deliberate care emerges, as the neatly positioned leather straps and well-polished surfaces of metal settle one next to another and their stone elevations. Too close for comfort, a stack of notes lies next to the teeteringly balanced mace-like weapons. As a viewer you're not quite sure, if it's meant for you. The knight has left, but he very well could be back.



Agilulf and *Evening star & Morning star* installed in the Kuva/Tila gallery space 2025. Photo by Fredrik Enges.

Expanded methods of forging

The wearable and articulated armour-set was crafted during the spring of 2025 and consists of a sallet-fusion helmet, a cuirass, pauldrons, couters, gauntlets and cuisses with polyenes.

Predominantly made of galvanized steel and forged cold, it was made to fit my measurements specifically. Stylistically the pieces do not follow any particular medieval era, but the referenced sallet helmet style was popularized in the beginning of the 15th century¹ and the cuisse-polyenes were referenced off of a replica of 14th century style leg armour.²

The other pieces are loose interpretations of historical armour, partially referencing multiple medieval eras and schools of design, though mixed heavily with contemporary design conventions. The likes of contemporary SCA³ and buhurt⁴ armours functioned in influencing their looks.

In the crafting process itself new interpretations of historical processes and modern technology were used interchangeably. For example, a traditional working method used in constructing an armour during the medieval period where steel sheets are cut to patterns and bent by the use of heat and steel form templates,⁵ was substituted with a full cold forging process and the welding of smaller, loosely approximated patterns together. Besides welding,⁶ another key piece of contemporary technology used was 3D printing. To ease the crafting of the particularly difficult form of the helmet (when done without a steel form template), it was first 3D modelled and fitted with the aid of a 3D scan of my head, then 3D printed in 1:1 size and used as a real-life reference throughout the forging.

¹ Wulflund, *The Story Of The Sallet*, <https://www.wulflund.com/tema/arms-and-armor/the-story-of-the-sallet>

² Referenced off of: https://irongatearmory.com/product/14th-century-leg-armor/?xdomain_data=fWhb8y%2BxdkOjy45z30SqnRcRGdQ2%2Fi6gb3PqWnms0vNkTtg283HeK2H2WZXvg%2Fqv

³ SCA refers to a form of rapier combat practised today, that takes after an unarmoured combat style from the medieval and renaissance periods.

⁴ Buhurt is a full-contact armoured combat sport dedicated to historically accurate combat techniques.

⁵ Forge Of Svan, *Making the armor: How they did it in the Middle Ages?*, <https://forgeofsvan.com/making-the-armor-how-they-did-it-in-the-middle-ages/>

⁶ While a form of force welding has been around since the medieval times, I did not have the chance to try my hand at it as the academy's forge was out of use during the spring of 2025.

Below the 3D model, 3D printed helmet and the final result.



Photo by Fredrik Enges.

In place of traditional steel buckles and leather straps, the back strappings of the cuirass and of the upper thighs of the cuisses, were instead parts integrated from a fall protection harness. These harness pieces in particular, shove the general impression of the armour toward a future-medieval one. The other straps, which of there are many, are dyed leather that follows the colourway of the harness.

Joint articulation was achieved by hinges and riveted lames, which are small pieces of steel plate fitted in a way that allows them to overlap while affording for movement on one or more axis. All straps and buckles were also attached by pop rivets, and all in all the armour contains approximately 200 rivets. The achieved articulation allows for example, a full range of motion at the knees and movement of all finger joints. The two-part visor of the helmet also has a range of motion, however achieved by a magnetic system instead of hinging and riveting. As the helmet mixes the general design of a 15th century sallet without a bevor, together with a 16th century burgonet helmet design without a visor, a creative liberty was taken to allow for a quick and seamless removal by using embedded magnets and rabbet joints.



A sketch depicting an initial plan for the armour and weapon design, and a photo of the final armour. Photo on the right by Ida Stenros.



The cuisse-polyenes, the cuirass and the right-shoulder pauldron in *Kuva/Tila*. Photos by Fredrik Enges.



The shoulder-pauldrons and couters as worn, from the back. Photos by Ida Stenros.



A photo of *Morning star & Evening star* on the anvil in the performance space. Photo by Ida Stenros.

Unconventional weaponry

“A weapon, with a star at the end of a handle, is called a morning star. It is a morning, with an endless amount of rises, innumerable landings. Of soft blows and hard dents. It never truly sets, and it's a struggle to hold it upright and to do so gently. From a burden far greater than its 3.5-kilogram heft. And when set down, its promise of violence, is never far from my heels.” Excerpt from the *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* script p. 4.

The performance props *Morning star & Evening star* double as installation pieces and marry together approaches of the working methodology and that of general notions of medieval history and medieval fantasy operating on the same level of historical credibility.

The morning star is a particularly recognizable medieval weapon, a mace with a spiked head that came into popular use by the beginning of the 14th century.⁷ Though practises varied across regions, in many city areas the peasantry was disallowed from carrying swords of certain types and lengths,

⁷ Medieval Britain, *Medieval morning star*, <https://medievalbritain.com/type/medieval-life/weapons/medieval-morning-star/>

peasants belonging to a manor might've also been disallowed from carrying altogether without an explicit permission from their lord.⁸ A proper morning star, was also monetarily out of reach.

What kindled my fascination with the morning star beyond its recognizability and beauty, was exactly it's nature at the crosshairs of class difference. A village blacksmith could manufacture a morningstar of sorts, from nails and a wooden shaft, that even the (non-manoral) commonfolk could relatively cheaply aspire to wield.

There is a blunt and brutal inelegancy to a mace, while it's knightly counterpart, the sword, enjoys a reputation of valour and grace, a mace is decidedly brutish. It relies on raw bludgeoning power, there is no dance of cleverly slipping the edge of a blade into unguarded and prone crevices.

An evening star on the other hand does not exist. It's nothing but a figment of my imagination, a pseudo-medieval fantasy much like many imaginations of the medieval history are. *The Morning star & The Evening star* are modelled so that they slot perfectly together, they're actually two separate maces. Their balance when connected together, might appear precarious but is in actuality quite secure.

"Protect me morning star, and hold the day together with evening." An excerpt from the *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* lecture performance script.

In the performance script I allude to the interwoven nature of these two objects and of that which they represent; That medieval history and the fantasies of that history are inseparably connected, and that this intermingling is but one cog of the machinery that forms parts of contemporary thinking now.

The two maces are cast from aluminium, and weight around 3kg each. While they're heavy and could certainly hurt someone if wielded, the cast aluminium is rather porous and suspect to breaking under excessive duress.

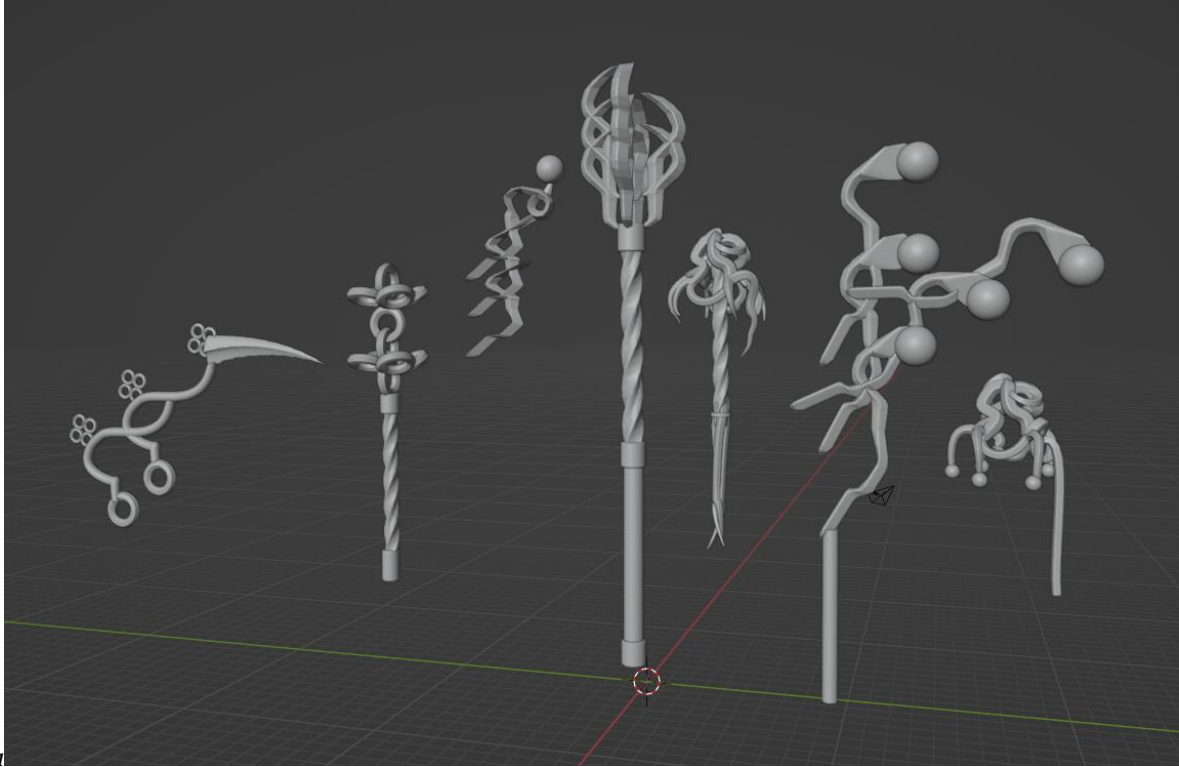
It feels particularly perverse to create weapons at this time of frankly horrifying set of global multi-crises we're going through in 2025. However, It feels good to deny them a purpose. To reduce them to simply what they insinuate. To their craft and design. To choreographies of movement that

⁸ Sandy Bardsley, *The Invisible Peasantry, Whose Middle Ages?: Teachable Moments For an Ill Used Past* 2019, 14-22.

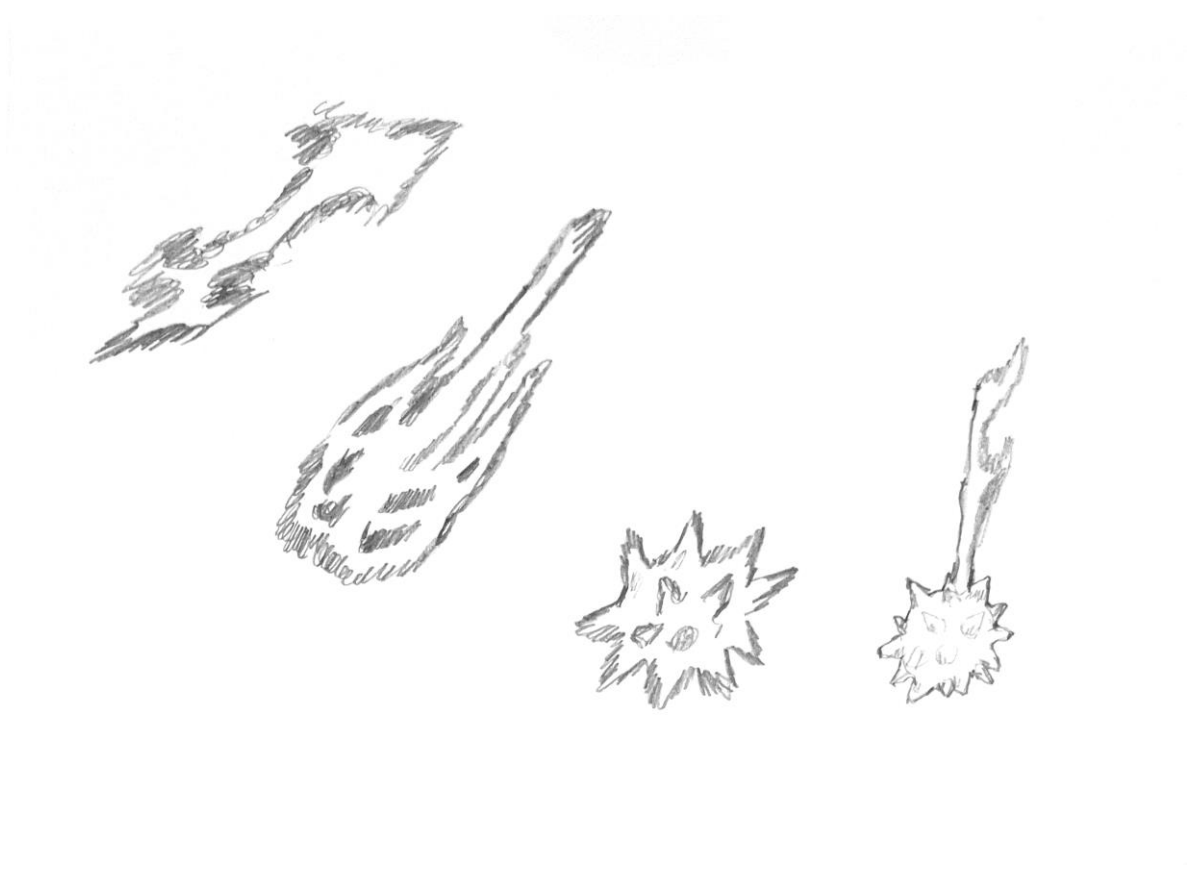
promise violence, yet never deliver. Soft blows in a playfight re-enactment. These weapons will never hit anyone, or cause hurt. And try as you might, you will break them. I am not trying to make a case for absolute anti-violence, but when it comes to a weapon like the morning star, that was usually used on behalf of state and county interests, it feels good to wield it, to be it's master and to decide it's fate.



Morning star & Evening star at Kuva/Tila. Photo by Fredrik Enges.



a



Initial sketches for the weapon designs, 3D modelled and drawn.

Casting Process

Morning star & Evening star are cast from aluminium using the ceramic shell casting technique. I opted to use the lost-PLA method, where the ceramic shell is formed around a 3D printed PLA object that is then burnt out of the shell during its firing process.

Both maces were initially 3D-modeled using the 3D-modeling tool Blender, then 3D-printed separated in eight parts before being re-assembled with an adhesive. At this point a casting- and air channels are added to the mould-object. For the casting channel I've used a paper cup and a PLA tube. For the air channels drinking straws.

In the ceramic shell casting process, the mould object is dipped in silicone slurry and doused with two types of silica infused stucco from 5 to 8 times, letting dry between each slurry/stucco cycle for around 6-8 hours.

When the required number of layers is achieved and the shell is dry, the PLA-mould object needs to be burnt out. This happens when the ceramic shell is fired and similarly to the lost-wax method, the PLA is dripped out. Burning of the shell and the casting itself is most practical to do on the same day. As the casting mould needs to be high in temperature when the aluminium is poured to avoid any ill reactions born out of drastic differences in temperature.

The metal casting process is a highly collaborative one and would not have been possible without the facilitation of James Prevett and my fellow co-casting students.

Curb spikes and waste

The curb spikes were first 3D modelled and then 3D printed in white PLA. The scraps used in the installation come from their print plate adhesion brim patterns and hold a resemblance to medieval ornamental patterns.



A photo from Riga's St Peter's Church that originates to the 13th century, a photo of the adhesion brim pattern and adhesion brim scrap in the installation at *Kuva/Tila*.



A picture from the very end of the performance. Photo by Ida Stenros.

6. Thematics of the Lecture In Depth

“I love to see a movie halfway, to drop a show right before the end. To read analysis on books I’ll never read, and critiques on art I’ll never see. To loan a book and to never read it. To begin a game with the second instalment. To rewrite the last pages of a book. To fill the cracks with my own tide.

There's something heady and hyper real in missing a link, in being out of the loop, in having to make your own conclusions. It is a continuous pursuit of a personal fantasy, a pursuit that all of life falls into. My affinity for incomplete media, is no different from my love of the incomplete conversations I overhear on my commute, or of the glimpses into the life of an office worker I catch from across my studio window. Of the open browser windows I can spy over someone's shoulder, or of gaining the lightest sense of a culture or a practise I know I'll never be fully privy to.

It is an endless projection of my own beliefs and narratives, of that which I believe happens during my averted gaze. And, it makes life a perfect haze of a story. A fantasy of the past and a fantasy of the future.

And history comes to me just the same, in bits and pieces. I could never know it all and I don't want to.” The opening paragraphs of *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* script.

I make an argument for a contemporary moment of a medieval-turn, that both exasperates and is in turn exasperated by late-stage capitalism and the current global rise of far-right actors, by alluding to a continuous regurgitation of misconstrued historiography, rapid changes to modes of information authorship due to accelerating digitalization and to discontent driving people to seek refuge in the past through a variety of forms of medievalist nostalgia.

What this means more specifically is that I'm suggesting a link between the theory of techno/neo-feudalism, the Gutenberg parenthesis and the current rise of neo-medieval aesthetics and rhetorics accelerated by the prevalence of nostalgia content, social unrest and a drive for an antithesis to modernity. I was particularly interested in how these phenomena work together in the delegitimization of minority groups from having a place in the past, and their condemnation as modern phenomena to be "solved".

I link this heavily to my own trans and queer status, and as one of the very starting points for this work was the alienation I experienced from medieval history, which I along other minorities have been driven to adopt. The intermingling of these phenomena has starkly highlighted exactly how suspect marginalized people are to being denied coevalness with their contemporaries.

I think Cord J. Whitaker puts it the best in *Race-ing the dragon: the Middle Ages, race and trippin' into the future*.⁹ He talks about his experience of working in and coming into the field of medieval history studies as a black man. About how by being a medievalist and being black, he was perceived as being out of time and place.¹⁰

"To be black is also to be other to the European Middle Ages, and this fact has had major implications for the construction of modernity and the place of race in it. It is but a short hop from imagining blackness as other in the Middle Ages to imagining it as absent in the period altogether. If blackness is not present in the European Middle Ages, then the evidence of black people's abiding presence in modernity – when black people write, appear in the television and radio media or, at the very least, board trains with the rest of us – means that they must be exclusively modern." Whitaker, *Race-ing the dragon: the Middle Ages, race and trippin' into the future*, p.5.¹¹

While Whitaker speaks specifically of the othering of black people from the Middle Ages, I think quite similar logics apply to multiple groups of marginalized people. While by my whiteness I'm

⁹ Cord J. Whitaker, *Race-ing the dragon: the Middle Ages, race and trippin' into the future*, *Postmedieval*, volume 6, 2025, 3–11.

¹⁰ Whitaker, *Race-ing the Dragon*, 3.

¹¹ Whitaker, *Race-ing the Dragon*, 5.

afforded a claim to the European Middle Ages in a whole another level of socially construed legitimization, queerness crawls in. No matter how readily I love the medieval, I'd be just as readily struck down for daring to entertain a place in it that wasn't of a violent and cruel end, or of an existence at all.

Often when something is sold to us as authentically medieval, the absence of and the violence towards minority groups are used as signifiers of medieval realism. However most medieval people were not violent, and only the few and wealthy could be knights¹². It's sometimes quite hard to imagine this, when we mostly see representations of the medieval times as something akin to *The Game of Thrones*, or when the violent crusades are invoked time and time again within political speech¹³ or when neo-Nazis' and conservative neo-medievalists fetishize the medieval period as one of racial and cultural purity.

Our notions of the Medieval period are wholly marred by ideas of violent cruelty, suspicion and close mindedness. It is imagined as a time of unchallenged simplicity, where everyone knew their lane and stayed in it, and where social control was absolute. It is perhaps no wonder then, that it operates today as an ample ground for fascists and conservatives to draw inspiration from and gravitate towards.

This however is not by simple coincidence, or from adherence to any unchallenged truths about the medieval times. From as far back as the Renaissance, even from medieval times itself, medieval history has been under a heavy regime of revisioning.

In her essay *The Invisible Peasantry* Sandy Bardsley succinctly reminds us of the fact that much the same as today, it was the invisible peasantry that dominated the population during the Middle Ages. About 90-95% of the population were laypeople, and it was their labour and craftsmanship that formed the culture as a whole.¹⁴ Like in our current age.

This 90% also lived outside of the cities *unlike* in our contemporary world. In *A Collection of Unmitigated Pedantry* Bret Devereauc tackles the pseudo-medieval aesthetic trope of "lonely cities", that is, the image of a lone fortress amidst fields of wilderness, and how this image reinforces the

¹² Amy S. Kaufman, Paul B. Sturtevant, *The Devils Historians: How Modern Extremists Abuse the Medieval Past*, 115.

¹³ United Nations Digital Library; American Presidency Project archive; UKPOL.

¹⁴ Sandy Bardsley, *The Invisible Peasantry, Whose Middle Ages?: Teachable Moments For an Ill Used Past*, 2019, 15.

false ideas of past societies that we're used to.¹⁵ It consequently also reinforces our undeserved focus on the attitudes and considerations of the medieval elites:

"For a Roman senator or a medieval lord, the only people who "mattered" lived in cities and castles and towns; the peasantry was of little account. This disregard was often quite openly paired with elite contempt for the common folks, often phrased in moral terms." Deverauc, *The Lonely City, Part II*, (blog).

This phenomena of a 'lonely city' illustrates this mishandling of history spanning from the medieval period up until now. The contemporary medievalist habit of disregarding the common folk and instead recreating the nobility, narrows our understanding of history.

Those capable of reading and writing were mostly either part of the nobility or the clergy, and most accounts of the lives of the peasantry were such that benefitted their lords. These kinds of records rarely have survived time or destruction, and the information they held focuses on legal or monetary records.¹⁶ We find ourselves sorely missing subjective accounts and the orally passed histories of events and disciplines regarding the lives of the peasantry.

When information about the 90% can so easily slip past us, we can only imagine how much that of the 0,5%¹⁷ does. What I want to particularly illuminate by highlighting the central role of the peasantry, is that what we know, think and venerate about the medieval times is largely the affect of class, race and gender.

It's of notable importance regarding the themes of *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* and its approach taken to queer medieval history, and the general subjugated knowledges of the medieval times.

Trans-versing the Medieval Times

The laypeople of yore were not always partial to their feudal overlords or church teachings. They were often savvy in gaming their legal systems,¹⁸ and churchmen complained about the clergy and

¹⁵ Bret Deverauc, *The Lonely City, Part I: The Ideal City*, A Collection of Unmitigated Pedantry (blog), july 12 2019.

¹⁶ Sandy Bardsley, *The Invisible Peasantry*, 2019, 14-22.

¹⁷ Referencing the approximate conservative percent of trans individuals within the general population.

¹⁸ Sandy Bardsley, *The Invisible Peasantry*, 14-22.

the common folk behaving quite differently from what one would expect. Priests wowed to celibacy took wives,¹⁹ contraceptives and abortions were not unusual, some monasteries had rather temperate reactions toward homosexuality within their walls,²⁰ and people had plenty of sex out of wedlock. While the Middle Ages were not free of misogyny, transphobia or racist thinking, it certainly wasn't all there was.

In *E' tat Pre'sent*, Bill Burgwinkle describes the Medieval times as a period in which institutional state regulation as we know it, hardly existed.²¹ Despite what one might think, the medieval times had room and interesting possibilities for agency, and variance in existence.

How medieval people approached sodomy, and how we understand it today as strictly homosexual acts, are not the same. Sodomy was categorized as all sexual acts that were not done in the interest of reproduction, e.g. for even pleasure alone.²² By this thinking then, the line where heterosexual and homosexual acts function as opposites is deconstructed.²³ The potential for sodomitic acts then, was recognized as existing in everyone, and wasn't as an innate characteristic you either had or not. Though there are derogatory texts about sodomites and same-sex relations, taking into account the kind of sources and texts we have:

“A condemnation of same-sex relations between a king or heir to the throne and his lover, or a monk and his confessor, does not necessarily mean that a similar condemnation would be made of such relations if they occurred between men of other classes or circumstances.” Burwinkle, *E' tat Pre'sent*, p.82.²⁴

When Burwinkle talks about a society where ‘institutional state regulation as we know it’ didn't exist,²⁵ in practise it means that there was no such large-scale system of governmental control, that could ensure same ideas about and repercussions for condemnable acts were practised everywhere. Peasants in rural areas and even communities within cities, could very well have their own social practises.²⁶ The image of a sole, ostracized individual condemned of sodomy, did not always ring

¹⁹ Paul Halsall, *The Experience of Homosexuality in the Middle Ages, 1988*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Burwinkle, *E' tat Pre'sent: Queer Theory and The Middle Ages*, 79-88.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Tess Wingrad, *Trans Middle Ages: Incorporating Transgender and Intersex Studies into the History of Medieval Sexuality*, *English Historical Review* Vol. CXXXVIII no.593, 2024, 938-945; Burwinkle, *E' tat Pre'sent*

true. There is evidence of social communities and social networks, where people were able to express their sexuality among friends, and of homosocial settings like monasteries, nunneries and knightly brotherhoods having evidence for homoromantic relationships or by the very least acknowledgements of such potentially happening.²⁷

However, that I was particularly interested in was transgender medieval history. And when looking into medieval transgender history, I was happy to find transgender saints, transgender monks, a transgender empress, a transgender common woman and a plethora of stories and myths where some variance in gender was present.²⁸

The two examples of particular note I kept running into, and who I reference in the lecture performance script, are Saint Marinos the Monk and Eleanor Rykener.

We largely know of Eleanor because of her court proceedings, for her having to defend her case. Her's is not the first nor the last case, that queer existence has been cemented to history in the court of law. She lived in the 14th century England, and was tried for sex work. She had been assigned male at birth, but lived her life largely as Eleanor. She was part of a network of mutual aid comprised of women, that accepted her, provided her with clothing and care and taught her sex work as a trade. Kadin Henningsen, the author of *Calling Herself Eleanor* writes that in modern terms, these women helped her to socially transition.²⁹

Saint Marinos the Monk, lived approximately during the 5th century in the Byzantine Empire. He had been assigned female at birth, but entered a monastery alongside his father as a man and lived the rest of his life there. Even when he was falsely accused of impregnating a local woman, he did not give up his identity and instead claimed the child as his own. In death, his trans status was revealed. He was canonized for his extreme devoutness, and for taking on the sins of others.³⁰

²⁷ Paul Halsall, *The Experience of Homosexuality in the Middle Ages*; Tess Wingrad, *The trans Middle Ages*; Roland Betancourt, *Queer Sensations, Byzantine Intersectionality*, 2020; Zeikowitz, Richard E, *Homoeroticism and Chivalry*, 2003.

²⁸ Roland Betancourt, *Queer Sensations, Byzantine Intersectionality*, 2020, 121-160; Tess Wingard, *The Trans Middle Ages: Incorporating Transgender and Intersex Studies into the History of Medieval Sexuality*, *English Historical Review* Vol.CXXXVIII No. 593, 2024, 933-951.

²⁹ It's of note that this also implies the possibility of other undocumented networks of trans friendly communities; Kadin Henningsen, *Calling [herself] Eleanor: Gender Labor and Becoming a Woman in the Rykener Case*, 252.

³⁰ A note can be made here, that his canonization could had had to do with misogynistic ideas about transcending womanhood; Roland Betancourt, *Queer Sensations*, 121-160.

From how medieval history is presented to us, one could be led to believe that such cases of transgender lives wouldn't have been possible. In *Byzantine Intersectionality*, Roland Betancourt describes how throughout the historiography, the possible experiences of transgender people are often negated and diminished. Describing or interpreting gender variant practises and people as transgender, Betancourt argues, is a far apter umbrella term than simply those of "transvestite nuns" or "cross-dressing" saints, as is generally used when describing the gender variant practises of medieval people.³¹ This kind of categorizing is done in the name of 'avoiding' anachronism, without an acknowledgement of the anachronism inherent to applying the ideas of contemporary cissexism and binary sexuality to premodern contexts.

What I've attempted to illuminate with this, is that a lot of narratives and subjugated knowledges have been wiped from our collective memory, and that this has been long in the making. The reputation of the 'Dark Ages' was borne from Renaissance period strive for an age of enlightenment, which incentivized to bad-mouth and fabricate an anti-intellectual, brutal, dirty and grim image of the preceding period.³² There is also a case to be made for the role of the Victorian era Romantic Revival in the muddlement of medieval history today, and on a smaller scale for that of the 70's and 00's.

This long winded process has made possible the co-opt of medieval history for fascist and white supremacist uses now. But not because their ideas of a puritan past are the true.

"But regardless of academic quibbling about the definition of a nation, few can argue that when it comes to *imagined* national histories, the Middle Ages play a prominent role. From the English Defence League spreading leaflets festooned with medieval knights and crusades, to Vladimir Putin erecting statues to his tenth-century namesake Prince Vladimir the Great to boost Russians' patriotic fervor, to French conservative leader Marine Le Pen giving speeches in front of statues of Joan of Arc, medieval symbolism is vital to nationalist sympathies." Amy S. Kaufman and Paul B. Sturtevant, *Nationalism and Nostalgia, The Devils Historians*, p.30.³³

In *The Nazi Middle Ages*, William J. Diebold highlights the violent *Unite The Right Rally* in Charlottesville Virginia in 2017, as an exemplary example of the attitudes of modern neo-Nazis

³¹ Betancourt, *Queer Sensations*, 121-160.

³² Amy S. Kaufman and Paul B. Sturtevant, *Nationalism and Nostalgia, The Devils Historians: How Modern Extremists Abuse the Medieval Past*, 2020, 34.

³³ Amy S. Kaufman and Paul B. Sturtevant, *Nationalism and Nostalgia*, 30.

towards the imagined medieval history, as opposed to how the 19th century Nazi Germany utilized the Middle Ages for their fascist regime.³⁴

In the shields of some of the neo-Nazis at Charlottesville, is a symbol that is called today “The Black Sun”. It’s one of the many symbols adopted in place of the swastika, and is actually a pattern from medieval jewellery of Alemannic origin. Diebold describes that for the SS, the use of this symbol was anything but banal. But for the neo-Nazis "the motif's history is significant, but that history goes back less than a century",³⁵ "the bearer of the Charlottesville shield had no idea who the early Alemanni were, nor the curiosity to find out".³⁶

I bring up in my lecture performance these Charlottesville shield-bearers, as I do Kyle Chapman, a member of the Proud Boys and also the founder of the Fraternal Order of Alt-Knights, FOAK for short.³⁷ As well as Marine Le Pen, A member of the far-right party National Rally in France, who annually holds a speech at a of Joan of Arc in Paris. She both invokes Joan of Arc and is often compared to her. For her however, Joan’s story is not about her gender or defiance, but of catholic devotion and the desire to expel foreign entities from France.³⁸ I also mention Mckenzie Levi who has self-reportedly gone to hundreds of left-wing protests in the Ohio area while wearing medieval armour, to antagonize and disrupt the protestors. He dresses up in medieval garb 24/7 and also runs the Lake Erie Historical Fencing club.³⁹

These are all people who exemplify the fragmented nature of our medieval history literacy, neo-medievalism and the far-right fringe group overtake of an increasingly central placement in our society and systems of knowledge re/production.

Where this links back to the forementioned Gutenberg parenthesis, technofascism and rampant rise of nostalgia content; there is a nigh universal construction of an antithesis for modernity.

Where I got interested in the theory of technofeudalism was from wanting to understand the ways medieval realities and futures are created today, and if it truly linked to a feudal structure or simply

³⁴ William J. Diebold, *The Nazi Middle Ages, Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill Used Past*, 2019, 105-115.

³⁵ William J. Diebold, *The Nazi Middle Ages*, 134-135.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/fraternal-order-alt-knights-foak/>

³⁸ John Lichfield, *The 600-year struggle for the soul of Joan of Arc*, Independent, 2012.

³⁹ Zachary Emmanuel, *Meet the Crusader Knight Who Fights Communists at Protests*, Countere, 2020.

loaned medievalist linguistics. My main takeaway was from Yani Varoufakis' way of describing techno-feudalism. Varoufakis is a Greek economist theorist who minds techno-feudalism in the terms of cloud-capital. As cloud-capital capturing out attention, manufacturing our needs and desires and selling us directly the things it has manufactured. It elicits free labour, monitors workers and *clouds* it all within digital payments and cloud processes. It is defined by digital serfdom and a ruling class of cloudelists, the tech-oligarchs.⁴⁰

While not emblematic of just techno-feudalistic capitalism but late-stage capitalism as a whole, I think in the manufacturing of desires is created needs and desires that capitalism can't fulfil, yet that face solving withing it's frameworks. This unwanted byproduct is dissent and dis-satisfaction with the status-quo. I think this is what is driving us toward the very roots for a wide-spread idealization of an anti-thesis to modernity. People seek refuge in the past amidst dizzyingly fast and constant re-organization of social order, information overload and acceleration of digitalization. The future is too changed, and too immediate.

The Gutenberg Parenthesis, for those unfamiliar, is a theory by Thomas Pettitt and Lars Ole Sauerberg. Their theory characterizes the prevalence of the printed word as temporary, an interruption to our modes of information authorship, production and creation. Furthermore, given as it is described as a *parenthesis* it implies a return to what originated.

At the decline of print, we're seemingly facing a return to more medieval, collective systems of information authorship, as more and more of our modes of producing and sharing information are digitally networked and collaborative in nature. In conjunction we have the looming promise of digital serfdom and of technofeudalism, where tech-giants driven by capitalist and right-wing interests exercise excessive control of our digital spheres, intellectual property and modes of governance.

Our current neo-medievalism can be seen embedded in something as innocuous as countryside dreams, in the cottagecore phenomena, in homesteading right-wing men touting apocalyptic worldviews and conservative values, in 'yummy mummies' rejecting modern medicine and tradwives embodying bioessentialist ideas of gender. In everyday aesthetics, cybersigilism mixed with dark fantasy air, in the Balenciaga jean- armour combos, in Y2K fashion trends borrowing from the medieval revival of the 70's. Within the arts, in the spiky balls and chainmail, paintings of anvils and knights. In the never-ending stream of high fantasy games and shows. It's in the memes of

⁴⁰ Yanis Varoufakis, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*, 2023, passim.

serfdom, and content creators donning armour or gothic dresses. In bardcore music, and lute remixes of popular songs. In celebrities like Chapell Roan or Zendaya donning Joan of arc inspired fits, in the "Future Medieval" design trends, in corporate-dystopian novels about the future. And in more, and more. Our engagement with all of these examples happens outside of our regular life, largely online.

In *Nostalgia accounts are destroying pop culture history*, Taylor Lorenz and Coleman Spilde bring up nostalgia content accounts on social media. Those, in favour of gaming the algorithm share categorically untrue pop-culture facts. They are small things, like that the music video for Baby one more time came out exactly ten years ago today, or that Miley Cyrus wore the jacket of his Ex while performing a song about him.⁴¹

Why care then, if these things are so inconsequential? This kind of entertainment content, gossip and hard news are intermingling, and it makes us more susceptible to overlook or accept misinformation.

Medieval history is much the same, drop-fed to us in small portions of circulated myths, both undeliberately and extremely deliberately. And the more agreeable we are to minor warps of reality, the more susceptible we become to major ones. While the far right sees the European medieval past as an antithesis to modernity, based on misconstrued ideas of the period as a time of a white-supremacist and patriarchal purity, of finding a cultural identity to Whiteness, where there is none, they're building a fictional narrative that drives to establish some people as a modern phenomenon to be "solved".

"When false historical narratives get a foothold more broadly, it makes it harder to correct the record. If we don't continue to reject language and framing that not only does violence to the past but also supports white supremacy, we may continue on a trajectory that proceeds dangerously to the point where such lies can no longer be corrected." Matthew Gabriele and Mary Rambaran-Olm, *The Middle Ages Have Been Misused by the Far Right. Here's Why It's So Important to Get Medieval History Right*.⁴²

⁴¹ Taylor Lorenz, *Nostalgia Accounts Are Destroying Pop Culture History*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5xX8P7_rMk; Coleman Spilde, *Why Those Big Pop Culture Accounts Are Lying to You About Beyoncé, Britney Spears, and More*, Slate, 2024.

⁴² Matthew Gabriele and Mary Rambaran-Olm, *The Middle Ages Have Been Misused by the Far Right. Here's Why It's So Important to Get Medieval History Right*, TIME, 2019.

I argue then that it is now more pressing than ever to make an effort to understand medieval history, or the fascists will do it for you. The medieval times were not the dark ages the right would like us to believe, and our medieval future doesn't have to be so either.

7. On Form: To Lecture & Perform

In *Disordered Attention*, Claire Bishop talks in the *Information Overload* chapter about the fallacies of research-based art and the role of text within an exhibition or an art piece.

The main point she makes in this chapter, is how the changes in digital attention economy since the 90' have transformed both the way we experience art and our art making processes. In that same timeframe research-based art has boomed exponentially, and followed in internalizing 'an internet logic'. This boom in research-based art is also indicative of the art education field having to subscribe to neoliberal systems of value in knowledge production.⁴³

“My point is that research-based installation art – its techniques of display, it’s accumulation and spatialization of information, it’s models of research, its construction of a viewing subject, and its relationship to knowledge and truth – cannot be understood in isolation from contemporaneous developments in networked digital technology.” Bishop, *Information Overload*, p.41.⁴⁴

In being subjected to an onslaught of information and such unwanted fodder like advertisements, Bishop suggests we’ve learnt to skip and skim over and across such distractions, and that our style of reading has shifted from one that flows, to one jumps.⁴⁵ She proposes that this gradual shift also translates to our viewership of art, where text, rather than appearing as a pleasure becomes a chore of high-speed information extraction and data-overload.⁴⁶

“An abundance of information without authorial pointers now feels unwelcome, plunging us into intellectual uncertainty, ...” Bishop, *Information Overload*, p.41.⁴⁷

This data-overload especially digitally pushes us to exercise constant vigilance, of what kind of information we prioritize and by who. Why I gravitate towards text in the form of a lecture performance (and performance in general), is because I see that live spoken text and the presence of the authorial subject of a lecturer, ease this fatigued, scattered routine present in 'information extraction'. In its amalgamation of elements from stage play, performance and lecture, it at once fails the standards of each, and carries a fragmented, jittering (yet) authoritative voice.

⁴³ Claire Bishop, *Information Overload, Disordered Attention*, 2024, 38.

⁴⁴ Bishop, *Information Overload*, 41.

⁴⁵ Bishop, *Information Overload*, 62.

⁴⁶ Bishop, *Information Overload*, 63.

⁴⁷ Bishop, *Information Overload*, 65.

I also generally don't think that my texts could work to their fullest degree without the intimacy of my attendance, the text I write concerns heavily with matters of the body and of grasping at what is often situational and hard to establish materially. In the case of this work, without the dramatics of the dim stage lights or of reciting to an audience akin to a prayer the things I want to be heard, donned in my *armour of legitimacy*, the text would ring hollow.

I've long held dear a quote from Joan Didion's essay *Why I Write*.

"In many ways, writing is the act of saying I, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying listen to me, see it my way, change your mind. It's an aggressive, even a hostile act. You can disguise its aggressiveness all you want with veils of subordinate clauses and qualifiers and tentative subjunctives, with ellipses and evasions—with the whole manner of intimating rather than claiming, of alluding rather than stating—but there's no getting around the fact that setting words on paper is the tactic of a secret bully, invasion, an imposition of the sensibility on the reader's most private space." Joan Didion, *Why I Write*, p. 18-19.⁴⁸

This approach to writing and text, I apply heavily in how and why I perform, or create any piece of art for that matter.

"I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear." Didion, *Why I Write*, p. 20.⁴⁹

It's at the heart of *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* to make an assertion, one of legitimacy. Lecture performance to me, operates at a stage of legitimacy for so called 'naive' or subjugated knowledge.

The artistic process of this work as a whole was largely focused on the methods of autotheory, new narrative and speculative philosophy of history. In what I've called a process of speculative commonalities,⁵⁰ which is an approach to history (and by conjunction present day phenomena) in the absence of hard subjective sources. It functions through selecting to trust in cross-time shared experiences and by utilizing anachronism for pinpointing a possible baseline for shared lived experiences to unearth subjugated knowledge, while staying informed as best as possible off the sources that are available to be referred to.

⁴⁸ Joan Didion, *Why I Write, The Writer On Her Work, Volume 1*, 1981, 18-19.

⁴⁹ Didion, *Why I Write*, 20.

⁵⁰ Not to be confused with speculative commons. I know similar processed to what I describe exist but here it refers to my characterization.

It's not literally dialogic, but imagines a space where one could be in dialog. It rejects ideas of societal advancement that characterize people of yore as innately and fundamentally different kinds of "beasts", as a counter to the rampant and often unacknowledged anachronism already present within the field of history studies. I set out to go explicitly against this widely accepted cis-hetero normative flavour of it. To look for the kind of past I'd idealize, the kind of people I yearn for. To emphasize the reality I care for.

"I want to talk to these people, so I talk to myself" Excerpt from the *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* script.

While my lecture text is fragmentary in its structure, it has less to do with gliding between signifiers akin to disordered reading, but the hope is, that the viewer is primed by the lectures starting paragraphs, to accept a theme of leaps in history, narrative and topics.⁵¹

Only recently, I've begun to regard myself as a performer despite my practice having focused on performativity throughout my studies. I suppose this has come about from lacking in the disciplines of body work, and instead to perform, for me, has been predominantly about co-presence, the work being undeniably activated, temporal and myself in direct communication with its viewer. Rather than presenting a work of performance, the performing I do, I characterize as an intuitive fumble.

To perform is to do what I do because it comes as extremely enjoyable and as necessary to ascertain having had come through with my words. I rehearsed most that which did not need to be, for pure enjoyment. The sonic interlude in particular; I bruised my knees black and blue by throwing myself into a kneel, and broke countless of the curb spike props to feel their satisfying crunch beneath my feet, traveling up my spine.

What is being presented is not a showcase of performative prowess, but of self-indulgence and stumbling. You cannot emit me in my whole earnest clumsy, and I get to assert despite my lacking-self a message worth hearing. The lecture performance allows for a position of authorship and authority, as I will never command respect born from abiding to the image of respectability, because by my queer failure I am not able to. I'll fail where the people capable can't and at worst I'll embarrass myself, and at best I'll unearth and pass on something precious.

"I propose that instead the goal is to lose one's way, and indeed be prepared to lose more than one's way." Judith Halberstram, *The Queer Art Of Failure*, p.6.⁵²

⁵¹ Can be seen at the beginning of the chapter *The Lecture Performance in Depth*.

The Queer Art of Failure by Judith Halbestram was brought up to me by my advisor Camille Auer, and became throughout the process a touchstone of facing any such failures as essential.

⁵² Judith Halbestram, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 2011, 6.

Agilulf

Somewhere at the beginning of 2024 I read Italo Calvino's novel *The Nonexistent Knight* about halfway through. The focal character Sir Agilulf, is an empty suit of armour. He's the very embodiment of chivalry and knightly virtues, yet his footing in reality is nothing if not precarious. He partakes in habits and rituals of holding his being together, and is also largely defined by how others and he himself perceive his knightly deeds. He finds it hard to fit in with his fellow knights and is ultimately a troubled, lonely and haughty being of pure effort.

For the longest time, I did not read the book through, and when I did, I wished I had not. If you are to read it, you should stop halfway. Just know that in the end Agilulf dissolves into nothing, someone else wears his corpse of an armour, and a town turns it's back to knights as a whole.

With the way I had identified with Agilulf, I felt acutely mortified by his fate. I too had felt like my footing in reality was as uncertain as his, and as easily desecrated. Felt, like I'm just barely there, as barely there as I was in history, as barely there as Agilulf, who organizes pinecones to will himself into being. As Agilulf, who can never lose himself to sleep or the night might sweep away his very being. Yes, you have to be vigilant to exist at all.

I now find rather more enchanting the beautiful possibilities I had for Agilulf with the book read halfway through. In a sense *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* was exactly that ephemereal idea of a better end for him.

Here is where I think opening the title of *Bridging the Gap in the Parenthesis* makes sense. What my working process set out to do, was to return like we are ought to with the parenthesis. Not only in forms of communication, back to something iterative, communal and medieval, but in the sense of a parenthesis of right-wing stake to the medieval history, where it is instead again returned to all of us.

8. Epilogue

I don't strictly remember where my fascination with medieval started, but in 2021 I had written an outline for a pseudo-medieval short story, and went on to visit the *Knights* museum exhibition at Vapriikki in Tampere. In 2022 I remember thinking for the first time that it'd be a neat idea to start a performance by riding in on horseback and a sword in hand, but the thought remained purely conceptual. I imagine the ultimate shift came when I went to see jousting for the first time in 2023; It was my first proper medieval festival as a whole, the ones I'd previously gone to had been in the Helsinki area and of a far more intimate scale.

That first time I saw jousting, I was left gasping in awe. What I saw was serene, and beautiful. There were no sounds, nothing at all. Standing there by the list field, the crowds drowned out, and the winds stilled. You missed the impact of the lances in a blink of an eye. Then round again, the riders went back to their starting positions. And rode to one another. I thought the meeting in the middle could've very well ended in an embrace. These people got to be modern knights, to invoke medieval like it belonged to them. I *too* wanted to plant my feet in that reality, preferably in steel armoured boots.

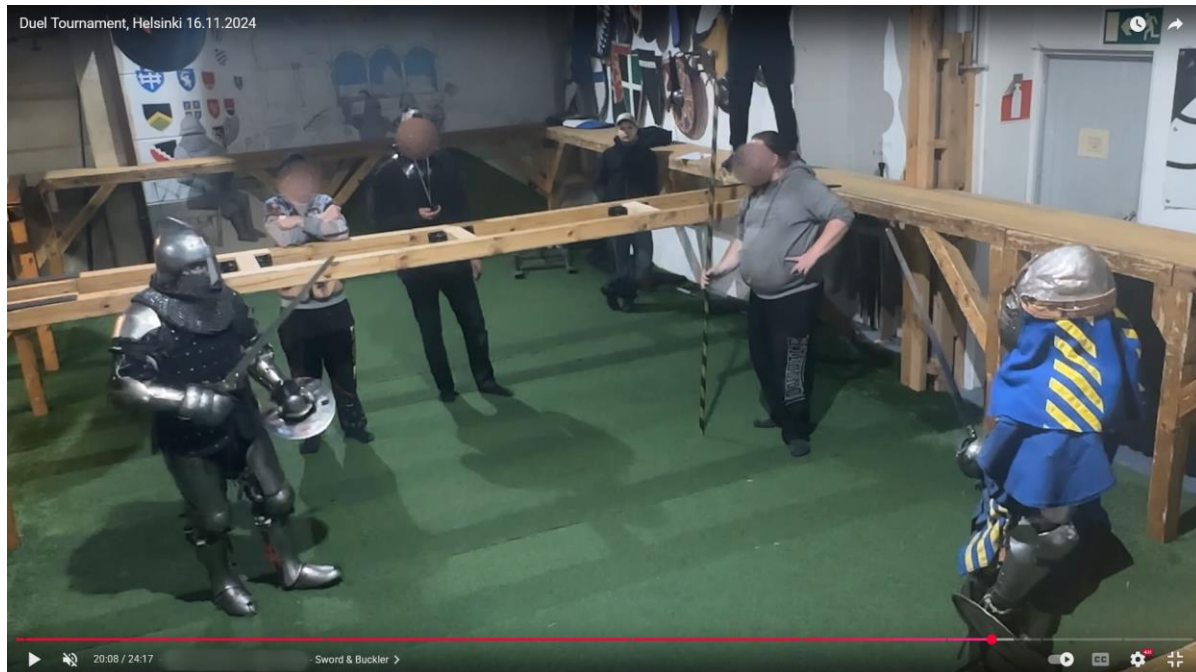
While the desire had come incrementally, once it hit, I found myself with such a sweltering burn to understand its origins, that suddenly calculating the price for a full set of armour was paramount, as was traveling to any medieval fair I could get myself into. At that time, I ended up reading half of Italo Calvino's *The Nonexistent Knight* which would later become the cornerstone of *Why Medieval/Fantasy?* it is today.

I ended up visiting the Helsinki Medieval Combat group headquarters and meeting a local professional armour smith for a coffee. The spring of 2025 I spent months on end hammering at the anvil and my evenings playing a medieval themed videogame to smith some more. This was a burn that turned the clangs of a construction site into those of a battle and had me taking 51 selfies with a statue of Saint George in the cellars of Rigas House of the Black Heads. It had my heart beating with lilts akin of a medieval romance, and lamenting after Agilulf in the weakened hours of nightly autumn winds.

While I can now securely say that the reason for that burn lied in a hunger for equal legitimacy in invoking the medieval past, equal to the fellow medievalists who differed in being cis or of a class background better aligned with the abundance of representations of the medieval nobility that we

see most of. Back then in the beginning however, I was curious as to by who, how and why medievalism was practiced and for what ends. Being keenly aware of the fact though, that medievalism pulled people who idealized the medieval period because of its conservative image.

Out of curiosity for the kind of characters or ideals people into the sport might want to embody, after corresponding with the group I was invited to follow an upcoming tournament and to speak with some of the members of Helsinki Medieval Combat club. They're the local association that provides space and teaching for the combat sport buhurt.



Very ticklingly, I later found the exact tournament on YouTube, and I can be seen following the ordeal in the background.⁵³

Watching the even unfold, whatever the score system is I cannot tell. I meet the only certified judge in Finland, who's years younger than me, years younger than anyone there. I'm amazed by her fervour for the sport and she tries to teach me the scoring system and describes the bureaucratic functionalities of the sport nationally and globally. This insider gossip on the global drama between schools of administration keenly reminds me of the melodramatic noble politics I follow in my medieval game. She is also a medieval hobbyist, she hand-dyes her clothes, and hand sews the

⁵³ Sir Lappis, Duel Tournament, Helsinki 16.11.2024, Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdxjVh90110>

stiches at the front, the inner stitching's are done by machine. At medieval festivals, in her historically modelled family tent, the coffee is brewed by an electric cooker.

I was struck by the realization that a medieval-now, multiple concurrent medieval fantasies, projections beyond averted gazes, were being created. Just the same as history was constructed, there was an ongoing dialog between constructing the past and the contemporary world affected by it. What was being presented and represented had nothing to do with medieval reality and everything to do with modern concerns.

Where exactly was the line between adherence to historical realism and modern fantasies drawn? For the sport, you're kitted out in your own armour. These things cost thousands of euros and are often an investment made over many years. They're made to measure, by forgeries in countries with long standing canons in their making. In the sport, there are strict guidelines to how your armour and weapons are supposed to look. They can feature only specific colours of natural dyes; you cannot mix and match armour pieces from different centuries but must stay within 50-year span. No ornamentation, or drawings are allowed, allegedly some decades ago there was a big problem of hate- speech and symbols being used so customization was banned as a whole.

The weapons need to follow period accurate designs as well, some selected engravings like a heart shape or a cross might be allowed to appear. The helmets are thicker and larger compared to their historical counterparts, and apparently certain modifications can be done in the name of safety.

I was hit with a wave of bizarre displacement, I had imagined that this character you get to build, a knightly you, held a lot of intrigue for the sports practitioners. When questioned if the members recognize themselves wanting to embody some ideal character, or other ideals linked to the medieval times, I'm told frankly that perhaps 30% of the people there are also medievalists, and that no one there is channelling the ilk of Knight Saint George. I found this extremely hard to believe. Standing there in that industrial hall, watching the fighters in their historical gear, seeing an unfinished gothic illuminere on the far end wall and hearing heavy metal blast across the space, I found it very bizarre. The heavy metal turned in my ears to *Gradual: Justus Ut Palma*, and the cacophony on my bus back home into that of rattling armours in an industrial hall.

The summer previous from that I had spoken with a Finnish archaeologist about his research into medicinal herbs used in the medieval times. He tells me, that the herbs that were cultivated then, run wild along the sides of modern buildings and can be spotted everywhere. Many of the plants were of the kind that had to be planted, weren't native, so we know today that these exact plants are ancestors of their mediievally planted brethren.

These same herbs can also be used to locate medieval housing sites. Even if nothing was left of the buildings, the herbs still remained. This archaeologist specifically, takes saplings from archaeological sites to add to his own collection. What a marvellous site of a medieval-now.

Summer 2024, I take an in-character medieval tour of the Turku Cathedral. A year later I'm given a narrated tour of the Turku castle by the same person. A friend recently mentioned that they know someone who gives tours at that caste, and I immediately wonder if it's the same person again.

January of 2025, I take a trip to Riga and onwards to Vilna. In the cellars of the House of the Black Heads in Riga, by an Incomplete statue of Saint George, gazing up the blade of his sword, I couldn't help but feel like the dragon he slays. Queerness is often allegorised with monstrosity, and while having had previously found liberation in choosing to own what you've been cast as, I couldn't shake the sense of unease at my own sudden scaly demeanour. That what I wanted is a different place in the story altogether.

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