

Paper Proposal for 'Limits' (*Approaching the Medieval*, 2016 Conference)

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CLOISTERS TO CLASSROOM: USING MEDIEVAL STUDIES IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) TEACHING



MS image: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS français 13342, fol. 1r (detail).

In the past few years, the boundaries of medieval studies have shifted beyond the university campus: when manuscript images are shared on Twitter or reblogged on Tumblr, our discipline is no longer the sole preserve of scholars and students. There is still, however, work to be done; in promoting the interest, relevance and utility of the Middle Ages, we need to ensure that we engage as large an audience as possible.

This paper aims to share the results of one such project: an attempt to integrate medieval studies with the perhaps-unexpected field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. More specifically, it will explore some early results of a teaching experiment: an eleven-week course that I teach at the ENS de Lyon's Language Centre, entitled *Manuscripts to Movies: the Modern Middle Ages*. Participants are all non-native speakers of English, many of whom have never studied medieval literature before, and certainly not in a foreign language. It was with some surprise, therefore, that they find themselves exploring the myriad ways in which the medieval world has been represented (and misrepresented) throughout the centuries, moving between the earliest Robin Hood ballads and 2014 episodes of *Doctor Who*, as part of their English language studies.

The choice of medieval studies, and more specifically the notion of 'medievalism', as the subject for an EFL course may seem overly demanding, or even bizarre. As I hope to show, however, medieval studies offers a surprisingly strong platform for meeting a wide range of learning objectives. My paper will therefore respond to two main questions: firstly, how and why do medieval studies integrate so well with language learning? More broadly, what can we, as specialists in medieval studies, learn about our own discipline by viewing it through the lens of foreign language learners? Teaching medievalism is ultimately, as my paper aims to suggest, one of the most effective ways in which we can expand the 'limits' of our subject.