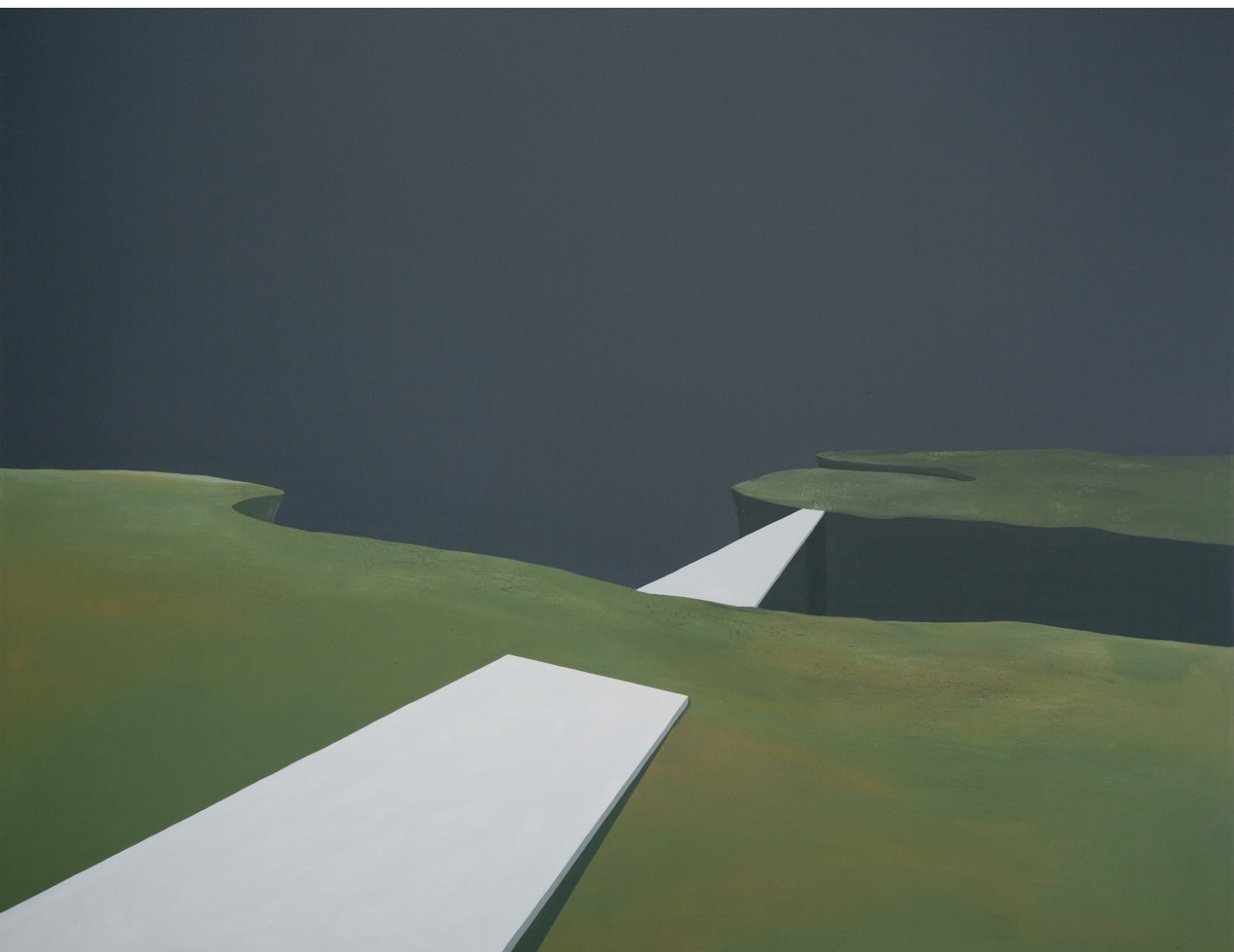


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Transformations and
Translocations of
Medieval Literature





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Introduction to *Interfaces* 9

This issue of *Interfaces* brings together papers given at the Centre for Medieval Literature's symposium on 'Moving Forms: The Transformations and Translocations of Medieval Literature,' held in Athens in 2019. At the heart of the symposium was the exploration of the ways in which the movement of people and books across space and time – mobility and portability – were driving forces of medieval European literary and intellectual culture. Men and women, clerical and secular, constructed extensive social networks and communities through travel, written communication, and the exchange of texts. Shared literary practices and forms occurred at the regional and transregional levels, defining local identities and forging links between people separated by distance and time. Around the North Sea and Baltic littorals, legends from the Norse sagas, for instance, were taken up by writers. On a larger scale, people from north-western Europe to China exchanged stories of Barlaam and Josaphat, while tales of Alexander are found from India to Ireland; in both cases, transmission was facilitated by the movement of people along the Silk Road. Rather than a full picture, often we are left with a set of trails, traces and clues that challenge us to create narratives out of the fragments.

This symposium sought to contribute to the understanding of medieval literature through the development of methodologies which examine the intersection of social networks and communities with literary forms. Papers attended to the agency of people (men and women), genres (literary, scientific, philosophical, legal, etc.), modes (verse, poetry, prose), styles, texts and manuscripts (book types, layouts, images) in creating literary links across space and time. Building on the practices of both comparative literature and entangled history, the symposium aimed to open up connections between literary cultures often considered to be separate. At the same time, and of equal importance, it was alert to the absence of connections, to discontinuities, exposing the diversities and ruptures of medieval literature, as well as the commonalities.

By following the movement of forms and tracing social connec-

tions from Antiquity to the Renaissance, the symposium and the papers collected here interrogated both geographies and chronologies of medieval European literature. Always keeping the intersection of the social and the formal in view, the symposium moved back and forth between small and large scales of time and place: the local, the transregional, the European, and the Afro-Eurasian. Issues of morphology, scale and periodization were central to discussion, enabling conversations across a wide range of material to gain traction and to shape. The discussions in Athens are key to the final versions of papers now published here.

The keynotes, papers, sessions and roundtables of the symposium, as well as subsequently commissioned work, ranged across Europe, the Near and Middle East and North Africa – Northwest Afro-Eurasia – from late Antiquity through to the sixteenth century. The three keynotes (not published here) anchored this range: Ingela Nilsson (Uppsala) on ‘Translocation as Translation, Transformation as Spoliation: The Forms of Medieval Story’ moved out from Byzantium; Nizar Hermes (Virginia) looked at Europe through the lens of Arabic history-writing in his paper ‘Les Noces of a Barcelonian Comte: Medieval Iberia through al-Bakrī’s (d. 1094) Andaluscentric Eyes’; and Elizabeth Tyler (York) ranged across literary cultures of Latin Europe before the twelfth century in her ‘Connected Vernaculars of Latin Europe, c. 350-c. 1150’. We are delighted to be able present here a number of the papers from the symposium which collectively cross these geographies and chronologies as they consider a range of forms, from romance to legal writing and from history-writing to animal fables in examining texts from Georgia, Egypt, Bohemia, Scandinavia and Western Europe (with extensions across the Atlantic into the Americas). While each paper has something for the specialist, we hope that they collectively encourage reading across the full issue, inviting readers to enter into the expanded, comparative and connected, approach to medieval literatures that the symposium explored.

We are delighted to include in this issue of *Interfaces* a substantial report on the Fribourg Colloquium 2021, which was held at the Institut d’études médiévales, University of Fribourg, Switzerland. The colloquium was entitled ‘Paradigmes et perspectives de la littérature médiévale comparée / Paradigmen und Perspektiven einer Mediävistischen Komparatistik / Paradigms and Perspectives of a Comparative Medieval Literature’ and saw the participation of all four *Interfaces* editors, as organizer and speakers. As the report reveals, the conference shares the *Interfaces* aims of taking a wide and

connected view of the literatures of Medieval Europe and we look forward to the publication of its proceeding in *Scrinium Friburgense* in 2023.

And finally, we would like to draw your attention to a piece about *Interfaces* in the recently launched American journal, sponsored by the New Chaucer Society: *New Chaucer Studies: Pedagogy and Profession*. 'Editing *Interfaces*: A Journal of Medieval European Literatures' can be found [here](#). The piece highlights the distinctive approach the journal takes to the study of medieval European literatures – working with an extended view of Europe and open to its place within wider cultural spheres across Afro-Eurasia. We address the direct link between our wider, more connected vision of medieval European literature and open access publishing – which places no financial barriers to who publishes and who reads.

The Editors