



^b
UNIVERSITÄT
BERN

Medieval Imaginaries of History, Alterity and Empire

Medieval Section within the GNEL/ASNEL Annual Conference,
Berne, May 18 – 20, 2012, on “Post-Empire Imaginaries?
Anglophone Literature, History and the Demise of Empires”
(<http://www.gnel2012.ens.unibe.ch>)

Call for Papers

In the past decade, postcolonial theory has increasingly been applied to studies of the Middle Ages, re-examining a range of canonical works, such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and rethinking the hitherto clearly demarcated temporal boundaries between the modern and the medieval. While the first momentum of what has become postcolonial medievalism struggled with questions of anachronism, scholars like Jeffrey Jerome Cohen have since shown that rather than being inherently different and having become obsolete, the very mediacy of the Middle Ages makes room for transhistorical intersections between the medieval and the modern.

Within the context of the GNEL/ASNEL conference on post-empire imaginaries, we invite papers on all aspects of medieval literature and culture that revolve around premodern imaginations of both a distant other and/or a local self. In a world in which there are vast areas of *terra incognita*, imaginaries step in to fill the void of the unknown. Medieval histories, chronicles and stories of pilgrimage and peregrination shape and negotiate fictions of alterity just as they create ideas of sameness and identity. History here does not merely form the backdrop against which these stories are told but it is part of the meaning they construct. The historicity of both ideological and geographical mapping of familiar and alien spaces, therefore, will form a common ground for discussion, linking our section on the Middle Ages to the wider framework of the conference as a whole. By investigating both cross-cultural and -temporal imaginaries, we will be looking beyond traditionally demarcated boundaries of empire(s) and re-examine Medieval Europe as pre- and post-empire at the same time. Medieval fictions of alterity and sameness not only gave rise to modern notions of empire but were already concerned with a certain post-empire nostalgia expressed in such works as Gildas's *Concerning the Ruin of Britain*.

Topics for papers may include, but are not limited to:

- premodern colonialism/imperialism
- medieval Orientalism
- geographical/ideological mapping
- medieval Christianity and Islam
- translating culture
- Anglo-Saxon England as postcolony of the Roman Empire
- medieval (literary) hybridity and alterity
- medievalism and historical trauma

Confirmed keynote speaker:

Alfred Hiatt, Reader in Medieval Literature and Culture, Queen Mary, University of London, U.K.

Papers are restricted to 20 mins. Please submit your abstract (max 200 words) and a short bio before 1 March 2012 to:

Prof. Dr. Annette Kern-Stähler
Chair of Medieval English Studies
English Department
University of Bern
Länggass-Strasse 49
CH-3012 Bern
Switzerland

annette.kern-staehler@ens.unibe.ch

Conference Website: <http://www.gnel2012.ens.unibe.ch>