

Excerpt
from *The Medievalist*

Since the 2016 presidential election, scholars have hotly debated the best way to counter the ‘weaponization’ of the Middle Ages by a rising tide of far-right extremists, [like the] white nationalist marchers in Charlottesville, Va., displaying medieval symbols.

—Jennifer Schuessler, *The New York Times* (2019)

Were it not for the whiteness, you would not have that intensified terror.

—Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (1851)

CHAPTER 1 Loomings

> One Dead After Car Rams Into Anti-Fascist Protesters [hyperlink: *The Guardian*, 13 Aug 2017]

Someone is typing ...

>

In the darkest corner of the dark net, I watched the blink- ing cursor as I waited for the next comment to appear, witness- ing the plot unfold before my eyes.

> Charlottesville went 2 far

> Not far enough IMHO

Someone is typing ...

> Car ramming worked.

> Depends. Made white chick a martyr 4 BLM

> Black lives matter? As if! 2 bad she was white. But that panic & fear ... U can’t buy that. LOL.

> Undisciplined. Besides, goal was 2 unify the right. *That* only happens w/ ideas. Actions fade. Symbols last. Proud Boys, Neo-Nazis, KKK. Spencer had good idea— all fly under “alt-right” banner— but no unifying symbol.

> Less than 30 showed at Unite/Right2!

> Pathetic

Someone is typing ...

All posts are anonymous, fulfilling the prophecy of Peter Steiner's 1993 *New Yorker* cartoon that, "On the internet, no- body knows you're a dog."

> RU proposing 'new & improved' rally? Alt- Right 3?

> Yes, but better venue. Kalamazoo in 9 mos.

> Michigan?

> Militia groups strong there. Oath Keepers, etc

> Y 9 mos?

> Need 2 get good symbol. Good unifying symbol = unstoppable movement.

> Any ideas 4 this symbol?

> No. But I know someone who can help.

CHAPTER 2

Sterling Library

I nipped across campus toward Sterling. One hand rested on my bookbag's leather strap, stretched across my chest like a baldric for a sword. The other clutched the ID and paper- work I'd need to confirm my assigned study carrel.

My carrel. My carrel.

Classes at Yale were scheduled to start the next day. I'd already moved into 300 squares west of campus—larger than a larder but smaller than an undercroft—likely no different than the studios of hundreds of thousands of other grad students since the invention of the U in the eleventh century. Fourth floor. No elevator. One room. A small sofa that, like, metamorphosized into a bed, crammed in one corner. In the other, two opposing chairs bordered a small, square table for both dining and study. Any madrigal feasts would needs be consigned to a hotplate and mini fridge. A bathroom smaller than a hermit's cell, with shower, stood to the left of the studio's one window. The four walls of the complex formed a shadowy cloister in the center of the building.

None of that mattered. Like, there was no mark on a measuring rod small enough to show how little it mattered. I'd be spending most of my time in the library and I, only in my first year, had been given a carrel!

Here's how events transpired. This morning, I met the grad studies secretary, a woman named Joby Wanamaker—*Help me, Joby Wan. You're my only hope*—who showed me my departmental mailbox and gave me the code for the photocopier.

“Eight-oh-oh. One-oh-six-six,” she said.

“800 and 1066,” I said back to her. “Charlemagne's coronation and the Battle of Hastings.”

Joby Wanamaker didn't respond, or, more likely, I didn't notice if she did. Regardless, she also gave me the form that I now held in my hand, signed by my advisor—a scholar without peer as far as I was concerned, though I still hadn't made his personal acquaintance—which bureaucratic permission slip would give me access to a library study carrel. It was the first I'd heard of this great perquisite.

I didn't expect it to be much bigger than the proverbial broom closet—which it was not—yet it would be my own office, in the library no less! What kind of chair would it have? Wooden? Cushioned? Four-legged or swivel? Would there be shelves? A file cabinet? Would the door have, like, one of those nameplate holders?

Mol Isaacson, Graduate Student

Molly Rebekah Isaacson
(whose father disapproved of her
pursuing a degree in Medieval Studies,
but I'll show him),
MA/PhD Candidate

M. Isaacson, Medievalist

I was already picturing different fonts—Lucida Blackletter, Papyrus, Zapfino—but the library's carved façade stopped me in my tracks.

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