

PROCLAMATION !

WHAT IS AMRS?

The Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance department at Ohio Wesleyan is an interdisciplinary major with classes ranging across the Humanities.

Majors and minors complete courses related to the time period of their choosing, with other courses relating to other periods sprinkled in, and finish off the major with a capstone project.

The capstone consists of independent research of the student's choosing, and is overseen by an AMRS faculty member. Previous capstone projects have included papers on witchcraft in the Renaissance, medieval faeries, and King Richard II!

THE STAFF OF THE TRIDENT

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We hope you've enjoyed this compilation issue!

THE TRIDENT

Compilation Issue



MEDIEVAL CASTLES IN A MODERN CONTEXT

By: Kyle Rabung

When the average person looks for medieval castles, they are left with two options: to look at ruins, or to look at a castles that survived into modernity. Yet, these both often inspire similar reactions. We, as moderns, look at castles and

see huge defensive structures and envision massive movie-like sieges that must have dominated the Middle Ages. This is what we want castles to be. We want sieges and battles and, more importantly, we want our castles to be simple in purpose

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and thus simple in nature. See, the complicated truth is that castles were rarely used in the manner that we envision, nor in the way we might think. Castles were important pieces of all manner of medieval issues: cultural, social, economic, and militarily. Castles were used for all of these purposes—and the military purposes were rarely large sieges. Even so, we can try to put this notion aside for a moment, and think about what castles mean to us today.

Castles seem to us a symbol of dominance, or a symbol of a perhaps-noble past. Speaking from a strictly American context, the United States lacks castles, so we seem to romanticize them to a greater degree. But what does

that say about us? This phenomenon is similar to the experience in the United States when Prince William was married. For those of us who live under rocks (like myself) nothing seemed amiss, but those who tuned into the news were barraged with live-coverage of the affair. Castles are like royalty: Americans lack them, and, thus, are fascinated by them. In fact, this American fascination runs quite deep. Those who require proof need only visit Landoll's Mohican castle or Squire's castle in Cleveland. Certainly, Americans have a history of fascination with castles—although some may argue that this only extends to British castles in particular. Perhaps this is due to our strong cultural affinity for that nation.

Fret not, however, as this endless fascination with the structures of the past hardly makes us unique. Each period of history seems to reveal that the current culture remains fascinated by cultures before them. Early Greeks looked on the works of their predecessors and saw structures that could only have been built by giants; Romans considered Greek art to be the best in the world. And then medieval peoples looked on Roman works as marvels of a lost empire. In

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fact, the subject of how each culture interprets the artifacts left by the past and then incorporates them into their own society is a subject that is better left to a far longer article on that subject alone. But rest assured that it does indeed happen from culture to culture. Those seeking some measure of evidence may seek out the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Ruin*. Ultimately, our fascination with castles and the past only prove one thing: We are not so different from our ancient and medieval ancestors.



WHAT IS THE TRIDENT?

The Trident is the AMRS department student-run magazine. Traditionally, the editors of the magazine have been from a variety of majors, showcasing the interdisciplinary nature of the AMRS major. Student editors curate pieces from students, professors, authors, or scholarly references in order to spread the word about the wonders of the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance worlds. If you're interested in learning more about the magazine, talk to Dr. DeMarco!

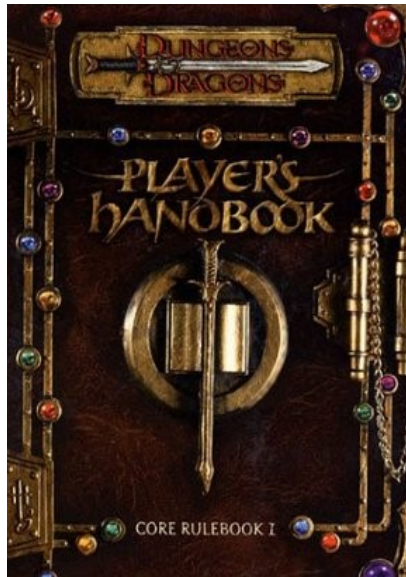
Even if someone is content in life, it can be fun to be a spell-caster for a couple hours.

Another aspect of the popularity is the veritable horde of celebrities who play the game and publicly endorse it. Successful actors like Dwayne Johnson, Vin Diesel, Robin Williams, and even Dame Judi Dench play the game, as do authors like George R.R. Martin, China Miéville, Stephen King, and Sherman Alexie. Even some of your professors play the game! Try mentioning your own games in a conversation some time.

As a Dungeon Master and a medievalist-in-training, I occasionally find inaccuracies in how the medieval setting for D&D is presented. D&D is indeed a fantastical world, but it draws very heavily upon medieval China, Europe, and the Islamic world for inspiration. Of course, some of the differences can be chalked up to magic or intercessions of the gods. One gripe of mine is how much D&D ignores gunpowder. There are some variant rules for the substance, but the Player's Handbook lists no fewer than seven projectile weapons, none of which uses a propellant. Yet Europeans had gunpowder as early as 1250, when a Norwegian text,

Konungs skuggsjá, mentions it as the best weapon for naval warfare, and the Chinese used gunpowder artillery a century before that. I suppose guns would make the ability to cast fireballs slightly less impressive, so I concede this point.

Still, part of the joy of Dungeons & Dragons is how the world is mine to shape with my friends. If I don't like a way the rules portray something, I can change it! Some of my players may whine at my ban of inappropriate and tactically useless armor for women, but in the end we all have fun for a few hours. Being a Dungeon Master is a fun way for me to exercise my creativity while being able to introduce my friends to some of my passions about the medieval world.



POVERTY AND STATUS IN COMMONS AND WASTELANDS

By: Emily Howald

How much do our most basic beliefs and abstract ideas influence our interactions with the environment? Turns out those influences can be quite profound. Cultural and social concepts of nature can greatly influence governmental policies about the environment in ways we might not expect. For example, one might be able to draw a parallel between the access to natural environments and changing beliefs about wilderness and wasteland.

To start, we can compare modern examples of public properties with the com-

mons of pre-eighteenth-century England. The rights of the commons refer to a particular property system that no longer exists but has similarities with many current public properties. Often the commons were stretches of land that were public, not technically owned by anyone, but under the rule of the crown. The lands had certain common rights associated with them such as the right to graze animals or collect fallen wood on the land. These rights were open to anyone, but would be most exercised by the “commoners,” or individuals of a lower economic class.

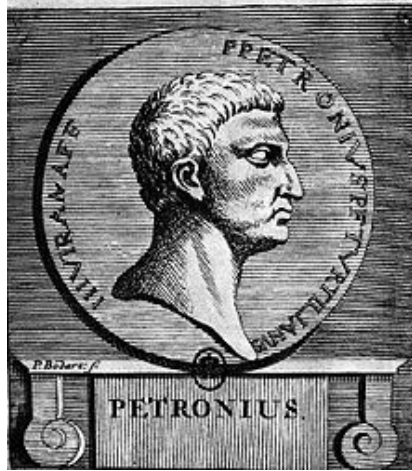


ON THE WORK OF PETRONIUS: *THE SATYRICON*

By Merritt Ver Steeg

Petronius Arbiter was a Roman who lived during the reign of Nero, and—according to most historians—the author of *The Satyricon*. We don't know much about Petronius' life, but according to Tacitus, "His days he passed in sleep, and his nights in the business and pleasures of life. . . Indolence had raised him to fame, as energy does others. . ." and he was seen as an "expert in luxury." Despite his freewheeling lifestyle, Petronius became governor of Bithynia, and later Consul. He was exemplary at his job—hardworking and intelligent. Eventually, Nero chose him to act as his "arbiter of elegance"—a sort of official trendsetter. Nero "thought nothing charming or elegant in luxury unless Petronius had expressed to him his approval of it." Ofonius Tigellinus, a Praetorian Guard, became jealous of Petronius' influence. He accused Petronius of having been part of a conspiracy against Nero.

Petronius didn't want to wait and see if Nero was going to have him executed or not, so he decided to commit



suicide. He cut his wrists and bound them so he would bleed out slowly, and died as he lived: eating, drinking, and talking trash. "He wrote a detailed report of the emperor's shameful excesses, with the names of his gigolos, his women and their innovations in indecency, and sent the account under seal to Nero."

Today, Petronius is remembered as the author of *The Satyricon*, a humorous work of fiction that explores vulgarity and ridiculousness. It follows three miscreants as they feast, fight, and debauch their way through the Mediterranean world.

The Satyricon mocks the extravagant debauchery of Neronian society. However, it is difficult to determine the

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Poverty was often associated with the commons whether or not the majority of the commoners were actually in poverty. Often, they may have just been in a lower economic and social class. This association with poverty may be partly due to the general definition of the commons as wastelands.

The commons were areas seen as inhabitable and generally useless to humans. These included lands such as thick forests, mountainous regions, and swampy areas. But the actual practice of the right of the commons contradicts its lack of use to humans. It is unclear how much the right of the commons supplemented the livelihood of commoners, but it has been suggested that it was essential to survival for many individuals. Not only could individuals supplement their food supply from products from the commons but they could also create many useful goods such as baskets, dyes, and brooms. Despite the actual use of these lands by commoners, the lands were often referred to as wasteland. For this reason, the common-

ers may have been perceived as poor simply by being associated with these wastelands.

For comparison, we may think of a national park in the United States as a current form of the wild commons of mountains and forests, however, few would describe it as wasteland. In addition, it is no longer primarily those of a lower economic class using the public lands. Entry prices and travel costs have made these areas accessible only to individuals of a higher economic status.

We may question what happened to this idea of access. More importantly, we may ask what happened to the ideas of wasteland that were so imbedded into the idea of the commons. Today, a Google-search of wasteland pulls up images of landscapes ravaged by human civilization, a very different wasteland from the wild commons of pre-eighteenth-century England. Perhaps different ideas of wilderness and wasteland can equate to different types of access to certain environments.

meaning of *The Satyricon* partly because it survives in fragments, which makes it difficult to understand, and partly because it is so utterly bizarre, so no one can make heads or tails of it. It has been classified as—among other things—a mock epic, an early novel, and a Menippean satire. But the first two definitions seem too narrow, and “satire” implies a preoccupation with morality that Petronius . . . lacks.

Despite *The Satyricon*’s raunchy reputation, it does have scholarly value. Unlike most Latin texts, which are poetry or oratory, *The Satyricon* has sections of informal prose—giving historians and classicists an insight into how ordinary Romans spoke.

Though it has its confusing and salacious reputation, *The Satyricon* has stood the test of time—it’s influenced many great authors. For example, Oscar Wilde mentions Petronius in *A Picture of Dorian Gray*, stating that Dorian wanted to be the London equivalent of what Petronius was to Rome. The epigraph of T. S. Elliot’s *The Wasteland* is a quote from *The Satyricon*. Most famously, F. Scott Fitzgerald based *Gatsby*, in part, off of the character Trimalchio—a pretentious nouveau riche freedman—and had originally intended to name the

book *Trimalchio in West Egg*.

The Satyricon, whatever else it may be, is a criticism of the excess, depravity, and shameless cupidity that Neroian Rome tried to pass off as sophistication. When other authors reference Petronius, they speak of him to promote restrained elegance and condemn unrefined extravagance. Perhaps, more than anything else, *The Satyricon* is a testament to three of humanity’s most enduring qualities: pretension, hypocrisy, and bad taste.



WHY IS D&D SO POPULAR?

By: Christopher Shanley

Tabletop roleplaying games like Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) are experiencing a Renaissance. The Satanic hysteria of the 80s is now mostly forgotten, and the generations that have been raised since have relatively flocked to the genre. The Player’s Handbook of the latest edition of D&D, 5e, has outsold each of the three previous editions. The newest edition had only been out for 2 years, far shorter than the editions it had beat out: 3e, 3.5e, and 4e. When the Handbook came out, it was also Amazon’s number one book, despite being a rulebook for a game generally considered to be “for nerds.”

One of the perks of this

new-found success is the increased diversity that 5e has encouraged. No longer are the sourcebooks filled with pictures of white men. Women and people of color are significantly more represented. The Handbook also directly encourages LGBT characters; it states, “You don’t need to be confined to binary notions of sex and gender... Likewise, your character’s sexual orientation is for you to decide.” This openness is part of the draw to Dungeons & Dragons. You can play as whomever you like! People enjoy being able to play pretend and live vicariously through their characters. It’s the same reason fantasy football, video games, and improv acting are popular.



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VIKINGS AND ROYAL POWER ON THE DINGLE PENINSULA

By Colin McGarry

The southern tip of Ireland is made up of four peninsulas running out to the southwest of the island, and back in the Early Medieval period the two northernmost of these peninsulas—Dingle and Iveragh—were ruled over as a single petty kingdom known as the Corcu Duibne, where the kingship was exchanged between three royal families. Officially, the kingship would rotate between the three chieftains of the region, although the historical records tell us the families would instead raid and assassinate one another in hopes that they would be strong enough to hold power whenever the last king died. This power dynamic changed in the 9th century, with the start of the Viking Age, as the chieftains from Dingle—the Ó Fáilbhe—recognized the benefits of having the foreigners on their side, and gave an island with good, natural harbors to a small group of Viking settlers in exchange for their loyalty. Even though there were only around five households on the island, which could supply ten to twenty fighting men at any given time, this small commu-

nity was able to have a large impact on the political landscape of the area. The Vikings could effectively control trade, as any ship coming from the west of Ireland would have to pass the island

ARCHAEOLOGICALLY, THE SITE IS EVEN STRANGER. . .

to trade in the southern province of Munster which provides a strong link to the Viking towns, such as Waterford or Dublin. This alliance between Dingle and the Vikings also granted them relative safety from raids, but could also be used to have a ready supply of mercenaries from other Viking groups on the island, giving them a strong military advantage over other royal families. From this new position of power, the Ó Fáilbhe were able to monopolize royal power, having an almost unbroken claim to the Corcu Duibne kingship from the 9th century until the Norman Invasion.

The Ó Fáilbhe kings were based around the stone forts of Leacanabuaile and Cahergal near the coastline of Dingle. Leacanabuaile Stone

Fort is fairly typical, matching the standard design of the Irish Ringforts—enclosed agricultural settlements that acted as home for a single family. Leacanabuaile contains two structures built into one another, acting as the main houses of the site: a square structure with a door facing the entrance of the stone wall, whose rear wall opens to the door of a smaller (and probably earlier) circular house, and three smaller structures off to the sides of the house, likely storage sheds or animal pens. The most interesting feature of Leacanabuaile is the *souterrain*, a very narrow passageway that runs under the circular house and into the outer wall of the fort: a common feature in high status settlements, thought to be used for hiding if the family was attacked.

While Leacanabuaile is a fairly standard site, only standing out because of its royal inhabitants, Cahergal is much more of an oddity. Visually, Cahergal is immediately set apart from other ringforts due to the immense height of the wall: almost 4 meters tall and built in multiple terraces, compared to the more fence-like walls of the average ringforts (for comparison, the wall of Leacanabuaile is only 1.5 meters tall),

and it has a large, completely stone house located at the center of the enclosure (even the stone houses of Leacanabuaile, and other stone forts, used a wooden or thatched roof)—neither of which the Office of Public Works decided to fund enough to reconstruct in full. Archaeologically, the site is even stranger as it revealed no artifacts: The only objects found were stones used to construct the buildings. The current theory regarding Cahergal is that it was a strictly ceremonial site, used only for rituals such as the inauguration of kings, and would be kept spotless when not in use. The massive, terraced walls would act in the same way as the Classical amphitheater. People from the kingdom would sit on the terraces of the walls, like bleachers, to watch the ceremonies as they took place.

