

# PROCLAMATION !

## UPCOMING AMRS EVENTS

**AMRS End of the Year Party:** Look out for your invitation to the annual end of the year AMRS party! Details of the event will be given in the invite.

## ANNUAL ESSAY PRIZE!

**Apr. 26th** - The AMRS Department is calling for submissions to their annual Essay Prize! Majors and non-majors are encouraged to submit papers to Dr. DeMarco's mailbox in Sturges Hall by April 26th at 4:00 PM. There is no page length requirement, but must be from an AMRS course from the 2016/2017 school year. For more information, go to OWU's AMRS Facebook page.

## THE STAFF OF THE TRIDENT

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**AMRS Chair:** Dr. Patricia DeMarco

Want to write a story? Have ideas for the next issue?

Send them to [jmwaterw@owu.edu](mailto:jmwaterw@owu.edu).

**Don't forget to submit to the Annual Essay Prize!**

ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL, AND RENAISSANCE STUDIES

# THE TRIDENT

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## 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  
*Continued on pg. 2*

### IN THIS ISSUE

The Ides of March - pg. 3

Religion in Medieval Ireland - pg. 6

Why are Dwarves Scottish? - pg. 4

Gaul: Rome's Final Frontier - pg. 5

A Recollection of a Senior Capstone - pg. 9

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



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 fact, the subject of how each

*Continued on pg. 11*

CONTINUED FROM  
PAGE 2

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.



### **CHECK IT OUT!**

#### **New books at the library!**

- Art and Nature in the Middle Ages* by Nicole Myers
- The Routledge Research Companion to Early Drama and Performance* by Pamela King
- French Visual Culture and the Making of Medieval Theatre* by Laura Weigert
- Gutenberg's Europe: The Book and the Invention of Western Modernity* by Frederic Barbier
- Love, History and Emotion in Chaucer and Shakespeare* by Andrew James Johnston
- Elf Queens and Holy Friars: Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church* by Richard Firth Green
- Living History: Experiencing Great Events of the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Alexander the Great*
- Living History: Experiencing Great Events of the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Socrates on Trial*



wealthy Roman family that probably wanted an “exotic” vacation home in the German countryside. Craftsmen settlements were situated just outside of the villa’s gates, which were much more advanced than the settlements at the fort—stone hearths, several wells, and a large public bath house survive.

Museums gathered many of these Gallo-Roman objects from the region and we could see how much of the Roman culture was adopted into the Gallic material culture. The collection at Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Cologne, Germany is almost exclusively chronicling the history of the Roman settlement—Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium—on which modern Cologne was built; there is an entire floor-to-ceiling wall of Roman glass and pottery found in Cologne and other material goods.

These museums tell the history of a certain site or region through its objects. We saw how an object from late antiquity evolved or disappeared into the medieval period, what stayed, and improved, and what was scrapped. By displaying these Gallo-Roman objects in museums we saw how other groups of people influenced the Gallo-Roman objects; for example, the inlaid enamel technique common in Celtic jewelry applied to Gallo-Roman jewelry.

The blending of these cultures were not always peaceful, even after the initial conquering by Caesar. The Gallic and Roman forces met most strongly at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE when many Roman legions—thousands of soldiers—were demolished by the Gallic tribes leaving an eerie empty field as a mass grave site.

## THE IDES OF MARCH

By: Merritt Ver Steeg

As both a Classics and an English major, *Julius Caesar* is my favorite of Shakespeare’s plays. Most people I’ve talked to think it’s boring. I might be a little biased, but I disagree.

When Caesar was a young man, he followed Marius, the leader of the Populares (a populist party). A civil war broke out between the Populares and the Optimates lead by Sulla—who wanted to keep power in the senate. Sulla put a hit on him, but Caesar managed to escape.

In his book *The Twelve Caesars*, Suetonius tells us that the Vestal Virgins and other important Roman figures pleaded with Sulla to pardon him, until finally Sulla caved: “Very well, then,” he said, “you win! Take him! But never forget that the man whom you want me to spare will one day prove the ruin of the party of Optimates which you and I have so long defended. There are many Marius’s in this fellow Caesar.”

He was right. Caesar went on to fight a civil war, assume control of the government, and became a dictator. The Roman Republic never recovered. Nor, it seems, did the world. From the Russian

“Czar,” to the Arabic “قيصر” (Qays’r), to Bahasa Indonesian “Kaisar,” Caesar’s name has influenced dozens of languages’ word for emperor—Caesar seems inescapable.

Shakespeare wasn’t too concerned about historical fact when he wrote his play, but even so, there is a measure of truth. A story about a charismatic egomaniac standing astride the narrow world like a colossus; an ignorant and gullible populace all too willing to be lead; and a fractious government of avaricious stooges. In these interesting times, I can’t understand how people find this play boring.

However, Americans are notoriously leery of kings, and it shows. According to Gallup, Trump’s average approval rating was 45% by January 29<sup>th</sup>. As of February the 19<sup>th</sup>, it has fallen to 40% according to *Gallup.com*. And no matter what happens, I find comfort in this: I am a classicist, and I know better than most that empires fall, walls crumble, and what goes up must always, *always*, come down.



## WHY ARE DWARVES SCOTTISH?

By: Christopher Shanley

When J. R. R. Tolkien reinvented the dwarf from traditional myths, he did so by altering their ancient characteristics. One of the primary ways he did this was by crafting a language and culture for them. Tolkien was an accomplished philologist; he learned the constructed language Esperanto, and wrote poetry in the language sometime before he was 17.

The Dwarves of Middle Earth are primarily based on the dwarfs of Germanic myth, yet the language that Tolkien created for them was not Germanic as one might assume. Instead, the Tolkien Dwarven language, called Khuzdul, is nearly entirely based on Semitic languages—

Hebrew, in particular. This coincides well with the constructed Dwarven culture. Similar to medieval Jewish communities, Tolkien's Dwarves only speak their own language when speaking to other Dwarves, and speak the languages of the groups they live amongst in their daily use. Similarly, Hebrew was only spoken in a religious contexts among many medieval Jews. It was considered a grave taboo to speak it in a mundane context, considering the holy nature of the language.

There are a variety of other parallels between Jews and Dwarves, such as a vast diaspora. Tolkien admitted, "I do think of the 'Dwarves' like Jews: at once native and al-



*Continued on page 8*

## MESULINE AND THE FAE: A RECOLLECTION OF A SENIOR CAPSTONE

By: Ashley Vassar

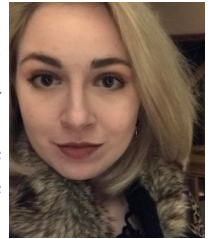
I initially became acquainted with the subject matter for my capstone thesis in the English Department during my Senior Seminar with Dr. Demarco. In this seminar, I encountered the concepts of liminality, otherness, and other themes surrounding the blurred lines of animality and humanity. One of the works we read was *Le Roman de Melusine*.

*Le Roman de Melusine* was written in the late 14th century by Jean d'Arras in order to help legitimize Jean de Berry's claim of the fortress of Lusignan. The titular character, Melusine, is a half-human/half-fairy woman who, after entombing her father in a mountain—as revenge for his betrayal of her mother—is cursed by her mother to turn into a serpent from the waist down every Saturday. In order to break the curse, become fully human, and attain salvation, Melusine must find a husband who will agree to never look at her when she is in serpent form. She marries a nobleman, and raises him to riches with her cleverness and fairy powers. They have many sons, and it seems as if all is

going well.

Until her husband sneaks a look at her as she bathes one Saturday. He later denounces her. Then, she turns into a dragon and flies away. My argument focused on the themes of penitence and salvation that appear within the narrative, as well as how these themes of penitence weave into a greater narrative that serves to legitimize Jean de Berry.

It was really exciting to have the opportunity to research *anything* that interested me. That was a lot of freedom to have, and it allowed me to choose a topic that I knew would produce some of my best work. I was able to dive deeper into the scholarship surrounding a piece that had fascinated me when I first encountered it in class. I got a more "authentic" idea of the type of work that graduate level scholars do. This paper definitely felt like a bridge between undergraduate and graduate work. It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my undergraduate career.



ien.” There were criticisms made of Tolkien for this, claiming he was showing anti-Semitism in his works. These critics believe the Dwarves’ fondness of gold, their alienating culture, and their large noses were gross caricatures of the Jewish people that were unwarranted. Tolkien attempted to rectify these issues in *The Lord of the Rings* by showing deep friendship between Gimli the dwarf and several elves. However, he did claim that the similarities were coincidental.

So the Dwarves started as a part of Germanic myth that became situated in a culture based on medieval Jewish culture. How, then, did caricatures of Dwarves advance so distinctly as Scottish, or at least Scandinavian? The Scandinavian Dwarves are an attempt to return to the mythological Germanic dwarf. The idea of presenting



Khuzdul as Scottish evolved slowly over time through various

sound adaptations of Tolkien’s works. Dominic Watt, a Senior Lecturer of Forensic Speech Science at the University of York, suggests that part of the reason Scottish accents

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were used by Dwarves is that many of the qualities the Scottish language invokes are similar to how Dwarves are perceived. Scottish accents elicit certain ideas: “Shrewdness, honesty, straight-forward speaking.” Watt suggests that the similar cultural stereotypes surrounding drinking habits link Dwarves and Scots. Now, however, virtually all English-language fantasy, dwarves are portrayed as Scottish, not Hebrew or Arabic as Tolkien envisioned. The Victorian accents of elves have a similarly complex history for the interested reader to research.

### ESSAY PRIZE!

Submit to the AMRS Annual Essay Prize by April 26th at 4:00 PM! More details are on the back of this issue. There’s also a post on the AMRS Facebook page where you can find the guidelines sheet.

## GAUL: ROME’S FINAL FRONTIER

By: Amanda Sisler

This past summer, I had the privilege of going on a Theory-to-Practice grant trip with Dr. Arnold and Johanna Burr to a region of Germany that was formerly invaded by the Romans in the time of Julius Caesar—the mid-40s BCE. For this trip, we examined places and objects to see the coming together of Gallic and Roman cultures. We visited a Roman fort, a villa, and some larger Roman structures that were worked into the modern cityscapes; they showed how different people lived based on their social standing and whether they identified as Roman. The objects preserved from these archaeological sites were housed in museums, and depicted this ethnic blending in finer detail. We found that as Roman society began to take firmer root within the Germanic countryside, settlements expanded outward with time, and Gallic and Roman identities began to blend into the hybrid culture of the Gallo-Romans.

There appeared to be a settlement pattern in which establishment of a Roman settlement would initiate local



Gallic artisans to congregate around the Roman location. Therefore, the Romans and Gallic people would interact with each other. Around the Roman fort at Saalburg, small settlements for local artisans lined the road leading to the fort and allowed these locals to buy and sell to the Roman soldiers basic amenities and specialized goods. Some of the exchanged goods are displayed within the walls of the fort and many objects were made using Gallic techniques but with Roman subject matter.

The villa at Bliesbruck is another example of this system of settlement. The villa was initially built for a

*Continued on page 10*

## RELIGION IN MEDIEVAL IRELAND: A TALK BY JOHN SODERBERG

By: Matthew Pheneger

The AMRS Department was pleased to welcome Denison University Professor of Sociology/Anthropology John Soderberg at the end of February. Though his work covers a range of disciplines, his presentation centered on religion in Early Medieval Ireland from an archaeological point of view. The big question his research focuses on—in Soderberg’s own words—is, “What does it mean to be a human taking part in religious activity?”

To help illustrate such a broad topic, Soderberg honed in on the relationship between the clerical and secular aspects of the medieval experience within the context of space and place, in particular Ireland. In Soderberg’s opinion, Ireland offers a uniquely uncomplicated case with which to study his queries, because of the country’s historical lack of distinction among its noble and common

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### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A HUMAN TAK- ING PART IN RELI- GIOUS ACTIVITY?

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classes. From the monasteries to the land, Soderberg utilized what is left of the architecture and archaeological record of animal remains found in the vicinity.

Monasteries are a point of interest because of their nature as religious structures—which are seen by most scholarship as a single step in a long chain of religious settlements that stretches back to the Near East. Animal remains are of a very practical benefit, often being the biggest remains that are preserved at archaeological sites. By examining these remains, archaeologists are able to discern clues about the social relationships between those secular farmers, who must have provided the livestock to the monastery and the clerical monks. The monks, then, inhabited and performed the associated religious functions with the livestock given

to the monastery. Considering the nature of the social relationships between seemingly juxtaposed spheres of life, we arrive at a deeper understanding of the role religion played in ordering Early Medieval society, and, by proxy, we can better appreciate the “big questions” at the heart of Soderberg’s research.

Most of the archaeological evidence in the case of the Early Medieval Irish monasteries points toward an extensive communal dynamic—between the clerical and secular—with monasteries and by extension their religious functions acting like a conduit through which a great degree of cooperation was fostered within the medieval world. Contrary to the typical view of monasteries that depict them as cloistered structures which are far removed from the secular world, Soderberg’s research suggests that entire communities may have sprung up around the monasteries. Among these were farmers and skilled craftsmen from whose expertise the monks received the benefits of life’s day-to-day necessities. It isn’t entirely clear how the craftsmen and farmers benefitted themselves, though Soderberg insists that these people weren’t stupid—they weren’t going to be tricked out of their

source of livelihood unless there was some form of reciprocity between them and their benefactors.

From a sociological/anthropological view, this suggests that modes of religious belief are an outgrowth of a primal human impulse, for cooperation within large, complicated groups. As such, Soderberg asserts that it is too anemic to portray the dynamic between mankind and its perceptions of God as one of hierarchical exploitation. On the contrary, the Medievals understood the spiritual and the mundane as inherently linked aspects of that organic whole for which they ever strived.

