

#Femfog and Fencing: The Risks for Academic Feminism in Public and Online¹

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HARASSMENT REMAINS A regular part of people's lives in the twenty-first century. Women, especially, and some men experience harassment at work, on the street, in class, and online. Such harassment includes microaggressions, bullying, sexual harassment, and assault, and it is worse for women of color, LGBTQ communities, and women with disabilities.² Combatting harassment is no easy prospect: reporting still rebounds on whistle-blowers; harassers knowingly benefit from a culture of silence.³ While our current model for handling harassment focuses on reporting individuals to institutional authorities, many people experiencing harassment find these mechanisms difficult to use, unreliable, and risky for their own careers. Many incidents of harassment, microaggression, and bullying take place outside of institutions, with no authority claiming jurisdiction or showing much interest in assisting targets. In addition, there is a broader culture that normalizes, accepts, and even encourages harassment. Academics have a flawed but

1. A version of this essay was delivered at Marist College in April 2016, at the invitation of Janine Peterson for Women's Studies and Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Thanks also to Adam Arenson, Melissa Ridley Elmes, and, especially, Linda Mitchell for their comments and suggestions.

2. Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, Gina C. Torino, et al., "Racial Micro Aggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice," *American Psychologist* 62, no. 4 (2007): 271-86, doi:10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271.

3. Susan J. Fowler, "Reflecting on One Very, Very Strange Year at Uber," 19 February 2017, <https://www.susanjowler.com/blog/2017/2/19/reflecting-on-one-very-strange-year-at-uber>, accessed 20 February 2017.

identifiable process for reporting harassment when it takes place at school or work; how they should handle harassment that takes place online, in the community, or against a group rather than an individual is, however, murkier. This article identifies and contextualizes harassment experienced by medievalists beyond the academy through two 2016 causes célèbres: the Allen J. Frantzen #Femfog affair and reactions to Rachel Fulton Brown's blog *Fencing Bear at Prayer*. These controversies cast a spotlight on the issue of misogyny swirling around the academy and the complexity of working in an online environment that is almost by default hostile to feminists and women.

Academics Online

Over the past few years academics have been encouraged to go public: to climb “out of the ivory tower” and find ways to present academic research to a mainstream audience. William Tyson encouraged scholars, “If your work has a broader public importance or you can help interpret local, national or world events, or offer expert opinion on matters of professional and public importance or interest, share your thoughts.”⁴ Historian Judith Bennett argued in *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* that activists and historians have diverged in their work, which has left histories written by academics without political power and left activists without a sense of the deep history of their projects.⁵ The resulting ignorance about the past, Bennett concluded, keeps both academics and activists from appreciating the larger patterns and models of both patriarchy and feminism. In the wake of the 2016 US presidential election, the massive wave of political and social activism in the United States, such as the Women's March, has provided an opportunity for scholars to re-engage with the public and to invest our research in activist work.

4. William Tyson, “Scholar as Public Intellectual,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 2011, https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2011/01/21/tyson_scholars_need_to_communicate_better_to_be_public_intellectuals, accessed 12 April 2016.

5. Judith Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

Web 2.0 social media—Twitter, Facebook, blogging, and contributing to Wikipedia—offer opportunities to reach more diverse audiences more quickly than the typical academic publishing schedule. Moreover, junior colleagues, graduate students, and undergraduates are able to break down “expertise walls” and report on their projects and research in these formats alongside more seasoned professionals. Social media also have the ability to interrupt existing gatekeeping practices that not only privilege established scholars, but also exclude or create barriers for women and minorities.

There is, however, a price to pay for making our ideas public and ourselves publicly accessible. Online harassment is real, and it is vicious. There are, of course, trolls and mansplainers, or those who delete articles on Wikipedia because they do not think women or women’s topics are worthy of inclusion. Next-level harassment—attacking women’s appearance or intelligence, threatening them with violence, stalking, rape, murder, corpse violation, and so on—are far more disturbing than merely blocking women’s access to sites like Wikipedia. These experiences are not exaggerations, but are instead threats that women report as routine, as normal, and as part of the cost of being online and female. Indeed, conservative blogger Milo Yiannopoulos suggested that women without skins thick enough to handle this sort of harassment—putting aside for the moment whether anyone should have a skin thick enough to shrug off threats of rape, death, and corpse desecration—should just log off.⁶

This sort of cyberbullying can spill over into real-life harassment. Several faculty have faced harassment so intense that the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) released a statement about “targeted online harassment of faculty.”⁷ Faculty have faced intense attacks online in response to public discussions of scholarly work on

6. Milo Yiannopoulos, “The Solution to Online ‘Harassment’ is Simple: Women Should Log Off,” *Breitbart*, 5 July 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/milo/2016/07/05/solution-online-harassment-simple-women-log-off/>, accessed 20 February 2017.

7. “Targeted Online Harassment of Faculty,” <https://www.aaup.org/news/targeted-online-harassment-faculty#.WVFWFYnyuP8>, accessed 26 June 2017.

breastfeeding, on color in Roman art, film, race and diversity, and Israel.⁸

Attempts to control bullying also have repercussions. Systems engineer Randi Lee Harper created an auto-blocker for Twitter to block users associated with harassment so that individuals experiencing harassment would no longer have to block each troll separately. As a result she has become a target and was SWATted last year.⁹ SWATting is a real-world attack in which a troll calls police to report a fake emergency that garners a forceful SWAT team response at the target's home. #Gamergate—a loose collective of trolls whose identity coalesced in 2014 in response to complaints about sexism in video games—specializes in harassing prominent women in the gaming world by doxxing, SWATing, stalking, and threatening rape and death. The FBI has taken charge of the investigation, but there appears to be no legal recourse for the victims, as our laws and courts have not yet caught up with the technology that facilitates harassment.

Tech companies have been unable to meet calls for better reactions to online harassment. In response to Lindy West's 2015 description of the harassment she had received—one man harassed her under an avatar of her dead father—Twitter CEO Dick Costolo admitted fault and promised a better response, with better reporting and blocking mechanisms.¹⁰

8. Such attacks are gaining attention if not solutions: Peter Schmidt, "Professors' Growing Risk: Harassment for Things They Never Really Said," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 June 2017; and Laura June, "People are Resorting to Death Threats Over How to Discuss Breast-Feeding," *New York Magazine: The Cut*, 7 April 2017, <https://www.thecut.com/2016/04/breast-feeding-dispute-leads-to-death-threats.html>, accessed 26 June 2017.

9. Leigh Alexander, "Online Abuse: How Women are Fighting Back," *Guardian*, 13 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/13/online-abuse-how-women-are-fighting-back>, accessed 15 April 2016. This practice has led the *Guardian* to ask "how long will it be before swatting costs someone their life?" Dan Tynan, "The Terror of Swatting: How the Law is Tracking Down High-Tech Prank Callers," *Guardian*, 15 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/15/swatting-law-teens-anonymous-prank-call-police>, accessed 15 April 2016.

10. Lindy West, *Shrill: Notes From a Loud Woman* (New York: Hachette Books, 2016); Lindy West, "What Happened When I Confronted My

These, however, still rely on the victim of harassment to identify and block trolls, who, once blocked, simply switch to a different account. Frustration with the failure to make Twitter into a community where abuse and harassment were taken seriously provoked West to leave the platform altogether.¹¹ As she noted in her book *Shrill*, trolls not only feel comfortable directing onslaughts of hateful, abusive language at women online, they do it as performance, seeking approval from their heroes and peers. The abuse is now so inherent to Twitter's structure that there appears to be no resolution.¹²

Compared to Twitter or Wikipedia, blogging is often a more hospitable and "safer" space for marginalized or vulnerable people, as it is possible to blog under a pseudonym and bloggers can control the level of comments. They have ultimate control of the content and do not need the approval of the community or risk having contributions deleted. Blogging can be a way for feminist allies to show support, as we might see on the blogs of academics such as David Perry, Guy Halsall, Claire Potter, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and Cohen's colleagues at *In The Middle*, but it is also a platform that academics who are perpetrators of harassment may exploit.

Cruelest Troll," *Guardian*, 2 February 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/feb/02/what-happened-confronted-cruellest-troll-lindy-west>; Nitasha Tiku and Casey Newton, "Twitter CEO: 'We Suck at Dealing With Abuse,'" *The Verge*, 4 February 2015, <http://www.theverge.com/2015/2/4/7982099/twitter-ceo-sent-memo-taking-personal-responsibility-for-the>, accessed 20 February 2017.

11. Lindy West, "I've left Twitter. It Is Unusable for Anyone but Trolls, Robots, and Dictators," *Guardian*, 3 January 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/03/ive-left-twitter-unusable-anyone-but-trolls-robots-dictators-lindy-west>, accessed 20 February 2017.

12. Yiannopoulos was permanently banned from Twitter after attacking actress Leslie Jones. Abby Ohlheiser, "Just How Offensive did Milo Yiannopoulos Have to Be to Get Banned from Twitter," *Washington Post*, 21 July 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/07/21/what-it-takes-to-get-banned-from-twitter/?utm_term=.76722bf7259b, accessed 20 February 2017.

Femfog

Academic blogs and social media can bring to light misogyny that social norms otherwise relegate to the shadows. Such misogyny is not hidden, but neither is it typically operating overtly, which makes it difficult to challenge. Among the many blogs by medieval scholars, two drew a great deal of fire in 2016: those by Allen J. Frantzen and Rachel Fulton Brown. Frantzen is a well-respected Anglo-Saxonist and author of *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (Rutgers University Press, 1990) and *Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2000); he recently retired from Loyola University of Chicago. He was an innovator in examining same-sex desire within Anglo-Saxon literature. Brown, an associate professor at the University of Chicago, blogs as “Fencing Bear,” where she wrote a post titled “Talking Points: Three Cheers for White Men.”¹³ Both published posts that were not noticed until several months later, in January 2016. Both scholars have blogged from a conservative position—Frantzen in support of MRA (Men’s Rights Activism) and Brown in support of conservative masculinity and, ultimately, of Yiannopoulos. Both of them have used their prestige in the academy and the cachet of their professorial status as credentials for their social, cultural, and political comments in public blogs. Both were reaching out for camaraderie from feelings of isolation within a world that many see as leaning Left. In doing so, however, both also overtly supported (to a greater or lesser degree) misogyny, online harassment, white supremacy, and even institutional hostility to women.

On January 14, 2016, medievalists started discussing Frantzen’s blog on Twitter and Facebook.¹⁴ Several posts across the blog contained

13. Rachel Fulton Brown, “Talking Points: Three Cheers for White Men,” *Fencing Bear at Prayer*, 5 June 2015, <http://fencingbearatprayer.blogspot.de/2015/06/talking-points-three-cheers-for-white.html>, accessed 16 April, 2016.

14. Much of the Facebook discussion took place on the closed SMFS group, which is accessible to approved Facebook members only. As a result I will only be quoting by name contributors to that group who have given permission for their words to be used here.

positions that were, to many readers, shocking in their vocal support for MRA and vicious antifeminism. In his blog, Frantzen explained “How to fight your way out of the feminist fog,” or “femfog,” which he defined as

the sour mix of victimization and privilege that makes up modern feminism and that feminists use to intimidate and exploit men. Some men are so intimidated by feminism that they are afraid to develop a critical attitude towards it. Feminism is enormously powerful. Enormously powerful movements should always be regarded with skepticism and wariness, especially when they are aimed at taking power from you. . . . The aim is **not** to share power with men. Men today live in femfog, a thick mist of anti-male propaganda. . . . Lots of men have been conditioned to think that women are an exploited and disadvantaged minority and that they deserve a break. These men have bought into feminism’s phony analogy between women’s rights and civil rights.¹⁵

Frantzen went on to detail a “three-step process for taking polite, firm, and informed exception to feminist propaganda” in order to free FUMs (“fogged up men”) from the femfog. He included a clarion call for men to help one another: “Like boxers, masculine men have to compete. . . . Or, as I put it every day, in three words: Grab your balls. Hereafter, GYB. These letters can also stand for ‘got your back,’ but—in life—a man can have your back only if you have your balls, which is to say only if your life and your manhood are in your hands, not those of your wife or husband or girlfriend(s) or boyfriend(s).” He also used the Matrix metaphor cherished by MRA to advise men to choose the red pill [RP] to get out of the femfog (men in the femfog are on the blue pill [BP]). He suggested that men are frightened of denouncing feminism because then they will not have access to sex with women. His guide for freeing FUMs from the femfog demonstrates how to reject feminism without losing a heteronormative sex life.

15. Since deleted but available on the Wayback Machine for 22 January 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160122163546/http://www.allenjfrantzen.com/Men/femfog.html>, accessed 15 April 2016. Frantzen self-published a book on these ideas late in 2016: *Modern Masculinity: A Guide for Men*.

Frantzen's blog thus espoused standard MRA, manosphere positions emphasizing manly virility, the importance of male networks, the threat of feminism to modern masculinity, RP/BP decisions, and the centrality of heterosexual sex to demonstrating male authority, freedom, and power.¹⁶ Frantzen promoted the traditional MRA argument that equality between the sexes oppresses men, that women already enjoy a privileged position over men in modern society, and that men endure sex-based discrimination (misandry) as a result. He suggested that men critical of feminism have neither the courage nor the protections to speak freely, connecting with the MRA and extreme Right position that freedom of speech should be both absolute and free from any consequence.

Immediate responses on Facebook mostly mocked Frantzen—his web design, his ideas, the abbreviations “femfog,” “FUM” and “GYB.” A great deal of fun was had with memes on Facebook and on Twitter.¹⁷ Several dismissed Frantzen as a crank or a kook, and suggested that he was perhaps senile or ill. Carla, a medievalist blogging at *The Syllabub*, wrote a post called “Laughing at Misogyny” arguing that the laughter was important: “And each person who contributes to the #femfog (whether with a joke, a meme, or with condemnation) is signaling that Frantzen’s rhetoric is not part of the future of the academy.” Indeed, the

16. Feminism is depicted as dangerous to gender relations, to men’s rights, but also to women themselves. See, for example, Milo Yiannopoulos, “Full Text: Milo on How Feminism Hurts Men and Women,” *Breitbart*, 7 October 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/milo/2016/10/07/full-text-milo-feminism-auburn/>, accessed 25 February 2017. Frantzen has gone on to solidify his connection to the MRA community through participation in their online “fireside chats” that feature a talking dog: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qz4T9ZmO_xU. In this chat Frantzen identifies his engagement with a men’s group circa 2012 as his “red pill moment” and also lists his academic credentials as part of his own introduction.

17. For example, Carla at *The Syllabub* blog noted that it was “easier for [her] to do this because [she’s] a late medievalist. Sure, I’ve read *Before the Closet*, but my work and research isn’t directly indebted to Frantzen’s work. I won’t run into him at conferences, or interact with him professionally.” “Laughing at Misogyny,” *The Syllabub*, 16 January 2016, <http://thesyllabub.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/laughing-at-misogyny.html>, accessed 16 April 2016.

large number of men responding critically to femfog was reassuring. As “Chevalier Courageuse” noted on Twitter: “The reaction to the #femfog thing yesterday was great: it was great to see so many men in the field a) denouncing [Frantzen] and b) RTing women.”¹⁸ Most responses condemned Frantzen’s rhetoric and its implications, positioning it as absurd or beyond belief.

Alongside the joking responses were critiques that pointed out the seriousness and danger of Frantzen’s positions. Anglo-Saxonist Peter Buchanan corrected those who wanted to dismiss Frantzen’s words as a joke and pointed out how important he was in his field: “Frantzen was one of the first and most important voices to talk about same-sex desire in Anglo-Saxon England. . . . He was at the forefront of a movement to bring theoretically savvy voices into [the] field . . . Frantzen has also been one of the most influential trainers of Anglo-Saxonists, people who are doing/have done exciting work on gender . . . , digital humanities . . . , and ethnicity.”¹⁹ Rather than mock and dismiss the website, Buchanan noted how much power and influence a prominent scholar such as Frantzen held in the field.

Jeffrey Cohen called the blog a “carefully crafted and hate-filled website that deplores feminism and is hostile to both women and men who believe in equality and refuse to continue a long, invidious history of denigration and violence.”²⁰ And: “Maybe it’s the femfog I’m shrouded in speaking, but the problem is not feminism (of which we have far too little, rather than too much). The problem is people like Frantzen, who in the guise of reason market hatred. I’m appalled by what he has written.”²¹ According to Buchanan the blog seemed “to be inhabiting a fantasy world where women irrationally hate and want to destroy men

18. This account has apparently been shut down.

19. Peter Buchanan, “Masculinity in a Fun-House Mirror,” 14 January 2016, <https://phenomenalanglosaxons.wordpress.com/2016/01/14/masculinity-in-a-fun-house-mirror/>, accessed 16 April 2016.

20. J. J. Cohen, “On Calling out Misogyny,” *In the Middle*, 16 January 2016, <http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/01/on-calling-out-misogyny.html>, accessed 16 April 2016.

21. *Ibid.*

for being men.”²² Or as he put it: “Frantzen has more desire to police what it means to be a man than any feminist I’ve ever met, and it’s just plain dispiriting. . . . I’m reminded of [T]he Office’s hilarious parody of men teaching other men how to be manly in the form of Dwight Schrute, whose relentless policing of masculinity is parodically summed up by Jim Halpert as ‘bears, beets, Battlestar Galactica.’ For Frantzen, the list apparently is balls, boxing, Beowulf, and the only reason early medievalists care . . . is because of the important things Frantzen has said about the third thing in that list.”²³

Lavinia Collins suggested that the problem with the blog was that it was not, as claimed, “about equality, politics and freedom, it’s actually about sex. How do you get women to have sex with you without having to go to the trouble of pretending you view them as equals.”²⁴ Collins went on to argue that it is hardly necessary for men to select their political viewpoints based on their ability or desire to have sex. Operating with this assumption is a pretty bleak view of men, not women. The blog’s adversarial language “suggests that female emancipation is male slavery. It suggests that feminism requires men be disposable,” rhetoric that is, of course, antithetical to feminist politics, which argue for equality, not domination. The notion that women are inconsequential playthings worthy only for conquest is central to another part of the manosphere, the pick-up artists (PUA). Indeed, one of the commenters on Collins’s article posted “Hi lavinia, love your posts. Do you have any pictures where I can see your beautiful face?” on 21 January 2016 with a “Little Hamster” alias that links back to the *Return of Kings* website, Roosh Valizadeh’s site. Roosh V is a well-known PUA, alleged rapist, and is reportedly pro-rape.²⁵ Roosh’s comment revealed that the manosphere

22. Buchanan, “Masculinity in a Fun-house Mirror.”

23. Ibid.

24. Lavinia Collins, “The Problem with Allen Frantzen’s FemFog Post,” 15 February 2016, https://laviniacollins.com/2016/01/15/the-problem-with-allen-frantzens-femfog-post/?utm_content=buffer21bfe&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer, accessed 16 April 2016.

25. Collins, “The Problem with Allen Frantzen’s FemFog Post”; Kellie Scott, “Return of Kings ‘legal rape’ creator ‘Roosh V’ hasn’t applied for visa,

was aware of medievalists' reactions to Frantzen. Discussion of the blog and responses appeared on Reddit; MRA and PUA communities took to Twitter to assert their control of the hashtags #GYB and #femfog and to harass medievalists using them.²⁶ Frantzen had himself linked to Roosh V and praised his method in his blog, while complaining, as Assistant Professor of English at Vassar College and SMFS Secretary Dorothy Kim identified it, that Roosh's ideas did not focus enough on men.

The heteronormativity of some of the blog's explanations led some to point out that Frantzen identifies as homosexual, and so his explanation did not account for his own motivations for supporting MRA positions. Indeed, as Donna Zuckerberg noted, his identity marginalized him within the "manosphere," which values primarily heterosexual masculinity: "Anything that deviates even slightly . . . being gay, or trans, or a woman with short hair, or a stay-at-home dad—is a perversion."²⁷ Of

Peter Dutton says," 2 February 2016, *ABC.net*, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-02/petition-to-stop-return-of-kings-meetings/7132062>, accessed 21 February 2017. Among other pro-rape arguments, Roosh has posted an article to his blog that he titled "I Am a Rapist." Roosh V, 11 December 2006, <http://www.rooshv.com/i-am-a-rapist>, and his argument for the legalization of rape: "How to Stop Rape," 16 February 2015, <http://www.rooshv.com/how-to-stop-rape>. Dorothy Kim, "White-Academic Supremacy: Rachel Fulton Brown, Allen Frantzen, White-Academic Supremacy, and Medieval Studies Go Mainstream in 2016," *Digital Whiteness and Medieval Studies*, draft version shared by the author, February 2017. Many thanks to Dorothy for generously allowing me to read this chapter while still in progress!

26. The tweet in question was from Milo Yiannopoulos (@Nero), obviously before he was banned from the platform a few months later. Dorothy Kim posted a link to "A DIY Guide to Feminist Cybersecurity" with advice on protecting personal information from malicious attackers.

27. Donna Zuckerberg, "Should Academics Fear the Manosphere," *Jezebel*, 27 January 2016, <http://jezebel.com/should-academics-fear-the-manosphere-1754937735>, accessed 16 April 2016. One even said "If indeed hetero men are going around thinking, 'I cannot possibly admit my opposition to gender equality, because then I won't get sex anymore as all women will find me utterly repulsive,' then feminist educators have done a great job. I like this premise." Courtney Rydel, Facebook post, 14 January 2016, quoted

course, longtime #Gamergate apologist Yiannopoulos similarly attacks feminism and argues that his identity as an openly gay man inoculates him—and his former boss Steve Bannon, and all of Breitbart—against assertions of homophobia and bigotry.²⁸

Many commenters noted how much they had previously respected Frantzen's scholarship and wondered whether that work was now compromised by the troubling revelations about his personal politics and misogyny. Commenters connected the views he had expressed on the blog with his academic work, starting with his recent book review in *Speculum* of a prominent collection on women and gender in which he wondered “must writing about gender be feminist? What are the choices here—feminist or bad? . . . Compulsory feminism is not a concept unique to the present volume,” in explicit echoes of his blog.²⁹ Since Frantzen had linked a list of his scholarship to his blog, he was the one to blur the lines between his activism and his politics. As Cohen noted, this suggested that Frantzen was “relying on the cachet of the [scholarship] to make the [website] seem learned or compelling.”³⁰ Indeed, Dorothy Kim has wondered whether Frantzen's credentials as a medievalist allowed him the standing to gain attention in the MRA community, and concluded that yes, they did.³¹

As conversation about the blog grew, several national news outlets picked up the story.³² Some saw the media attention as a mixed blessing,

with permission.

28. Yiannopoulos said of Bannon on Channel 4 “I am a gay Jew and he made me into a star” in November 2016.

29. Allen J. Frantzen, review of Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, *Speculum* 90, no. 2 (April 2015): 500–502. See also <http://www.allenjfrantzen.com/Men/compulsory.html>.

30. Cohen, “On Calling Out Misogyny.” Then discussion turned to his contribution to the 1993 *Speculum* issue on Medievalism and Feminism: “This guy has been mad about feminism for nearly 25 years.” Amy Kaufman, Facebook post, 14 January 2016, used with permission.

31. Kim, “White-Academic Supremacy.”

32. Zuckerberg, “Should Academics Fear the Manosphere”; Rio Fernandes, “Prominent Medieval Scholar's Blog on 'Feminist Fog' Sparks an

since the articles focused on the individual and his blog rather than the systemic problem he represented.³³ Indeed, the larger media outlets have consistently failed to report on the continuing questions concerning Frantzen's professional conduct. Reports have begun to surface that Frantzen had employed these extreme views while in a position of power and authority. One prestigious medieval historian claimed she suspected—but could not prove—that he had vetted one of her grant proposals and dismissed it as too feminist.³⁴ Judith Bennett commented that it is “so aggravating that Frantzen has been *and still is* a go-to scholar for those who want a ‘man who can talk about feminist scholarship in the Middle Ages.’”³⁵

A major subject of debate in response to the revelation of the blog was whether or not its political positions are reflected in Frantzen's scholarly work. Diane B. Wofthal has argued that they must be: “I don't know that one can separate political views from other spheres of a person's life. This Allen Frantzen has been quite outspoken in his political views, and we all know what they are, and they're hurtful and they're damaging. And to honor him is to look the other way.” Robert E. Bjork, director of the Arizona Center of Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS), which is publishing a *festschrift* in Frantzen's honor,

Uproar,” 22 January 2016, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Prominent-Medieval-Scholar-s/235014>, accessed 21 February 2017.

33. One SMFS member commented: “That Chronicle article is a curse. [Chronicle readers] are completely unaware of how this situation isn't only a matter of that one blog post, but a pattern of both abusive personal interactions and questionable professional publications,” Anonymous, 24 January 2016, used on condition of anonymity.

34. Lois Huneycutt, Facebook post, 16 January 2016: “pretty sure one of my grant proposals was vetted by him and returned with comments essentially saying, ‘This is a history of religious practice that's really history about women. It's bound to be biased and distorted. There's nothing in the proposal itself that would suggest that, but these people can't help themselves.’ I'd rather believe it was him that there are more of them out there,” used with permission.

35. Judith Bennett, Facebook post, 15 January 2016, used with permission.

disagreed, even though he was “deeply offended” by Frantzen’s blog: “You must have a friend who is hardly tolerable in some situation, but you’re still that person’s friend.” Thus the *festsschrift* moves forward, but without Frantzen’s name in the title.³⁶

Frantzen’s blog posts, followed up by his MRA fireside chat and now his self-published book, suggested a strong feeling of victimization at the hands of academic women. While he also expressed solidarity with men, that solidarity came as a shared oppression. He described ways he might lead these “FUMs” out of the Femfog, like a pied piper, teaching men to “GYB” once they are on the red pill. This language rests on a notion that women, particularly feminist women, control the academy and the world. Indeed, as Kim observed in *Digital Whiteness*, Frantzen “[i]n defense to claims that his comments have discouraged women from academia, [. . .] says that women dominate academia. This particular fact of course can be disproven by the statistics of academia.”³⁷ For Frantzen, even having women make up a minority of the academic community feels like domination and oppression of men. As the popular saying goes: “to the privileged, equality feels like oppression.”

Many medievalists asked in the wake of the Femfog revelations what action they might take. Many wanted to offer support to the victims of harassment, but many also wanted to demonstrate support for feminism in the face of such strong hostility from a celebrated scholar. SMFS and Babel created merchandise with slogans medieval feminists might wear at Kalamazoo, Leeds, and other conferences; there was an open letter to the Medieval Academy; some contacted *Speculum* regarding their policies in assigning book reviews; and SMFS’s executive board proposed reviewers with expertise in feminist scholarship. Historian Monica Green urged scholars to contribute feminist-inclusive syllabi to

36. Gabriel Sandoval, “Fem Fog’ Fallout: Scholars Wrestle with Honoring a Colleague Tarnished by a Blog Post,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 June 2016, <http://www.chronicle.com/www.library.manhattan.edu/article/Fem-Fog-Fallout-/236891>, accessed 27 June 2017.

37. Kim, “White-Academic Supremacy.” Statistics from “Fast Facts,” The National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61>, accessed April 17, 2017. Total fulltime higher education faculty breakdown is 54 percent male; 44 percent female.

the Open Syllabus Project in order to demonstrate support for teaching feminist texts.³⁸ Scholarly societies made statements of inclusivity.³⁹

As the conversation slowed down in late January 2016, after two weeks of discussion, some pondered whether the response to Frantzen's blog was too vicious. Where, some wondered, was the line between critique and cyberbullying? This is certainly how conservative figures have depicted the reactions of the Left to messages of hate, misogyny, and exclusion, as Kellyanne Conway has demonstrated adeptly. And, indeed, early on someone had jokingly asked for Frantzen's address and suggested sending a glitter bomb; this was immediately shut down as stalking. Unmentioned was that such a doxxing technique is a tool of harassers. Yet, this sort of activity aside, describing those who stand up to harassment as cyberbullies is a false equivalency. Further, while MRA and other denizens of the "manosphere" embrace a rhetoric of victimization that depicts them as the target of feminist harassment, that does not mean that identifying them as harassers constitutes bullying.⁴⁰ While Frantzen's blogging had few vocal defenders within the medievalist community, it remained clear that some medievalists wanted to separate Frantzen's scholarship from the blog, while others thought that Frantzen's scholarship and reputation for harassment within the academy justified, or even necessitated, both linking his professional and personal work, as well as speaking out against the blog in the context of that influential position.

38. <http://opensyllabusproject.org/>; Green's message posted to Medfem-l listserv on 22 January 2016.

39. SMFS President Liz Herbert McAvoy released a statement, 20 January 2016, <http://smfsweb.org/presidents-statement/>, accessed 16 April 2016. Elaine Treharne released a statement from some Anglo-Saxonists tweeting on the hashtag #ILoveOldEnglish. @ETreharne, 17 January 2016. A petition circulated to the Medieval Academy, which also agreed to produce such a statement. The Material Collective posted a similar statement affirming commitment to fairness and openness. Rachel Dressler, "Embracing the Fog," 24 January 2016, <http://thematerialcollective.org/embracing-the-fog/>, accessed 16 April 2016.

40. Dorothy Kim shared this perspective on Facebook, 20 February 2017.

Fencing Bear

A few days after the Femfog affair broke, Dorothy Kim posted a link to Rachel Fulton Brown's blog post "Talking Points: Three Cheers for White Men" on SMFS's Facebook page and began a long conversation that Brown later referred to as her "personal feminist gaspfest."⁴¹ In the "Talking Points" post, Brown celebrated the ways that she believed white men had, at certain moments in history, supported white women in ending rape, requiring marital consent, and establishing woman suffrage. She concluded: "three cheers for white men! Hug a white man today!" Brown's blog entry's sentiments reflect an orientalist valuation of white, Western men who supposedly protect white women that is common in conservative discussions. For example, on her FoxNews program *Off the Record*, Greta Van Susteren used International Women's Day in 2016 to celebrate American men for not being the Taliban: "On this International Women's Day Eve, it'd be a good time for us women to recognize that American men, let's give American men a shout out. Things aren't perfect . . . but American men are by far, very by far, the best men on the planet . . . and American men deserve to hear that from us."⁴²

While some noted problems in the historical perspective implied in Brown's post (rape has not ended, marital coercion continues, and many men fight against equity and equality of the sexes), responses to Brown focused on the racism and misogyny implied in the post, with many agreeing with Kim's framing of Brown's blog post as a work of "white feminism." Many commenters discussed the importance of

41. Kim, Facebook post, 17 January 2016, used with permission. Brown, "Why I Love Milo," *Fencing Bear at Prayer*, 1 February 2017, <http://fencing-bearatprayer.blogspot.com/2017/02/why-i-love-milo.html>, accessed 24 February 2017.

42. Greta Van Susteren, *Off the Record*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/transcript/2016/03/07/greta-special-message-on-international-women-day/>, accessed 24 February 2017. But this is not limited to conservatives, as Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, wife of Canada's Prime Minister, suggested on Facebook that to mark International Women's Day 2017 we should spend the day celebrating "the boys and men in our lives who encourage us to be who we truly are, who treat girls & women with respect."

critical race theory and intersectional feminism for our field broadly. There was a clear division in approaches to the blog: those who wanted to maintain community and solidarity on the one side, and those who wanted to attend to the exclusions inherent in feminism that is not intersectional on the other. Like those who had argued that Frantzen and the “manosphere” silenced women and marginalized their work, there was concern that a feminism that was not inclusive enough would marginalize friendly and sympathetic colleagues. For others, suggestions that our community was not already inclusive were flagged as “divisive” and “counterproductive.”

These are not new conflicts to feminist communities, nor are such debates limited to the SMFS’s internet activities or even to Facebook. In the year since this debate over Brown’s blog began, we have seen the same perspectives play out publicly in discussions about the Women’s March that took place in cities around the world on 21 January 2017, as well as on Pantsuit Nation, a massively popular “secret” Facebook group that garnered a great deal of media attention for its role in sharing stories of solidarity for women and their allies during and especially after the 2016 presidential election. Pantsuit Nation has been repeatedly accused of whitewashing and poorly attending to the voices of women of color, as well as complaints from white participants that suggestions that some women have not been included are “divisive.”⁴³ The iteration of these sentiments across the feminist internet demonstrates how much work

43. Sadie Muzaffar, “Dear White Feminists: Your Good Intentions Aren’t Enough,” *The Huffington Post*, 1 December 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/a-letter-to-open-minded-genuinely-kind-educated_us_58404ebce4bob93e10f8dff, accessed 22 February 2017; Amanda Hess, “How a Fractious Women’s Movement Came to Lead the Left,” *New York Times*, 7 February 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/07/magazine/how-a-fractious-womens-movement-came-to-lead-the-left.html?_r=0, accessed 22 February 2017. Dorothy Kim discusses this trend of white women responding to criticism from women of color with hostility through a quotation from Sara Ahmed on “feminist killjoys” in Kim, “White-Academic Supremacy.” As she later asks: “Why is it hard, even in a Facebook group for medievalist feminists, to model or even understand intersectional feminism?”

there is still to do in understanding the exclusions of “white feminism,” of handling white fragility, and in making our feminist spaces more fully intersectional.⁴⁴ Kim’s forthcoming book *Digital Whiteness and Medieval Studies* takes up this subject in Medieval Studies more broadly.

There are many links between Brown’s case and Frantzen’s in the relationship between their scholarly work and their online activity. Several commenters argued that it would be inappropriate to evaluate the scholarship of these scholars based on the blogs they write, which were more personal and political than scholarly. Yet others feel that it is impossible for scholars to divorce their subject positions and political outlook from the work they do; the scholarship *must* be considered in conversation with the blogs. The personal politics of the scholar by necessity shape the scholarly work s/he does, and this is to be expected and articulated.

Brown joined in the SMFS Facebook discussion of her blog post on the same day it began and encouraged commenters to draw a distinction between her work as a scholar and the blog, which she claimed was penned by an alternate identity—the stuffed, white bear in her blog’s photos. To her credit, Brown responded calmly, with some humor, and with a willingness to learn from her critics, although the fact that many praised Brown for participating civilly then frustrated Kim, who received little praise for also nurturing a challenging conversation.

Some called for more collegiality and a different tone to the conversation. And, indeed, when some commenters realized that Brown was participating in the conversation, they shifted their tone. One even apologized for making what she called an “ad hominem” and “rude” attack.⁴⁵ At one point Brown admitted to feeling silenced in liberal-leaning academia for her opinions and to struggling to find her voice in the blog. There are echoes here of the tone-policing we see in calls for civility in the university, in which those who denounce racism in strong language are less accepted than those who defend racism or misogyny in superficially polite terms.

44. Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3 (2011): 54–70, <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/249>.

45. Amy Vines, Facebook comment, 17 January 2016, used with permission.

For Kim, the unwillingness to call out Brown's ideas on the SMFS page was telling, and Kim noted that she did not see it as possible to have a "civil conversation about white supremacy and whitewashing as 'civility' is just another code-word for people wanting to stop oppressed parties from being justifiably angry about oppression, death, murder, etc."⁴⁶ Some agreed that the lack of support for Kim in pointing out white feminism was a microaggression in itself, that failing to critique structural oppression works to support those structures. The conversation concluded without much constructive progress, except to make clear that the SMFS community was not united in its interpretations of feminism, oppression, or race.

As with Frantzen, Brown's larger blog reveals that the controversial positions she espouses go beyond this one post. Elsewhere in her blog, Brown worries about being "metaphorically lynched," referencing negative responses she anticipates from hostile people when she reveals that she is not liberal. Brown seems ignorant about the historical weight of the word "lynched," as well as of the harassment women and minorities experience online, or is at least using the term more thoughtlessly than she should.⁴⁷ But Brown's sentiments are so similar to Frantzen's on this point that one might conclude that she has felt like a FUW—a "fogged up" woman, unable to claim the power to criticize feminism or liberal ideals. Both Brown and Frantzen have admitted to feeling as outsiders in the academic community, with some legitimacy: faculty in universities and colleges overwhelmingly identify as liberal.⁴⁸ Yet the language of oppression they have each adopted to express feelings of isolation and difference fail to match the reality of their situation. Both have enjoyed careers as respected academics, tenured at elite institutions, with well-received publications. They are both in positions of notable power and

46. Kim, Facebook comment, 17 January 2016, used with permission.

47. Brown, "The 47.8%," *Fencing Bear*, 14 November 2012, <http://fencingbearatprayer.blogspot.com/2012/11/the-478.html>, accessed 1 March, 2017.

48. Scott Jaschik, "Professors and Politics: What the Research Says," *Inside Higher Ed*, 27 February 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/27/research-confirms-professors-lean-left-questions-assumptions-about-what-means>, accessed 12 April 2017.

authority in the profession. While there have been strongly negative critiques of their ideas, neither has been removed from these positions.

Moreover, it bears consideration that the content of both Brown's and Frantzen's comments are not simple expressions of conservative positions. Each has expressed ideas that oppress, harass, belittle, and demean categories of vulnerable people. They do this not from marginal positions themselves, but from centers of power as white, middle-class, able-bodied, well-educated elites. And the people whom they admire—Yiannopoulos, MRA, PUA, and other extreme-Right advocates—have used their own platforms explicitly to shame, harass, bully, attack, marginalize, and exclude these same vulnerable people—to literally take them out of the conversation.⁴⁹ Expressing no tolerance for hateful positions is hardly a response in kind.

In Fall 2016 Rachel Fulton Brown began to focus her *Fencing Bear* blog on Yiannopoulos, and in December began blogging for Breitbart.⁵⁰ In February 2017 she published a piece in *Sightings: Religion in Public Life*, an online publication of the University of Chicago's Divinity School's Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion. Brown linked to this publication on her faculty web page and her *Fencing Bear* blog, and she cited the blog in her "resources" section of the *Sightings* article.⁵¹ During the conservative Right's disenchantment with Yiannopoulos later that month—when he was disinvited from speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference, lost his book deal, and was forced to resign from Breitbart after videos surfaced in which he

49. Yiannopoulos, "The Solution to Online 'Harassment' is Simple"; Diana Tourjee, "Trans Student Harassed by Milo Yiannopoulos Speaks Out," *Broadly*, 3 January 2017, https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/trans-student-harassed-by-milo-yiannopoulos-speaks-out, accessed 22 February 2017.

50. In "Kung-Fu Milo" she compared him to the Messiah: "you have to admit the parallels are riveting."

51. Brown, "Why Milo Scares Students, and Faculty Even More," *Sightings: Religion in Public Life*, 16 February 2017, <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/why-milo-scares-students-and-faculty-even-more>, accessed 22 February 2017; Rachel Fulton Brown, faculty web page, <http://home.uchicago.edu/~rfulton/>, accessed 22 February 2017.

spoke flippantly and, it seemed, approvingly of pedophilia—Brown was actively blogging and posting publicly on Facebook in support of him.

This activity had a different resonance for medievalists than the January 2016 discussion of her earlier post. First, Brown directly referenced her scholarly credentials when writing for Breitbart, “came out” as herself on *Fencing Bear*, and linked to the blog and Breitbart on her University of Chicago faculty page. The linking of her personal, political blog posts with her faculty web profile settled debate over whether the one identity should inform the other, particularly as medievalists responded to these pieces across various Facebook pages. It also raised flags, according to Brown, for her department chair.⁵² Given the divisive climate of the 2016 presidential campaign and the atmosphere of protest following the January 2017 inauguration, the stakes of these conversations were higher. Thirteen months of more visible engagement with the extreme Right, with Yiannopoulos and Breitbart, and with both misogyny and white supremacy have raised the profile of Brown’s advocacy for “white feminism” and responses to it.

In these statements, Brown spoke favorably of many of Yiannopoulos’s positions, including his hostility to feminism and his support of #Gamergate. Brown downplayed the nastiness of the #Gamergate attack on women and embraced their claims “that they were right to push back against the politically-correct journalism trying to tell them what games they were allowed to play.”⁵³ She accepted and repeated the claim that #Gamergate was simply defending “integrity in journalism,” rather than demanding priority for their own views, but also diminished the vicious trolling of their victims—trolling that included rape, death, and bomb threats—as, simply, “push back.”

Brown’s defenses of Yiannopoulos centered on his “truth-telling” in a way that is reminiscent of Frantzen’s writings about feminism. Just as Frantzen wanted to clear space and build courage for “FUM” who were unable to risk criticizing feminism, Brown claimed she admired Yiannopoulos for doing just that—making the criticisms that “nobody has

52. Brown, “Bear’s Two Bodies,” *Fencing Bear*, 5 March 2017.

53. Brown, “The Milo Effect,” *Fencing Bear*, 22 February 2017, <http://fencingbearatprayer.blogspot.com/>, accessed 22 February 2017, and Brown, “Why I Love Milo.”

been willing to say lest they get shamed, shouted down, and told to shut up.”⁵⁴ Over a series of blog posts and public Facebook posts, Brown articulated a devotion that reached the level of hero worship of Yiannopoulos (even declaring love for him) for saying things she felt others were too cowardly to say. Many of her interlocutors suggested that this “cowardice” was because such things were harmful and inappropriate, but Brown questioned all such limitations on speech.

Thus, Brown’s article in *Sightings* identifies exactly the tension medievalists have struggled with regarding her political writing: the importance of personal beliefs to professional scholarship and teaching. Brown noted with disapproval the academy’s move away from explicit discussions of religious belief (although she implied this was true only for Christians): “[I]t is considered a terrible breach of etiquette, horribly rude even, to mention your religious faith if you are a Christian, never mind suggest that it in any way affects your work as a scholar. This relic of the self-censoring of the late 19th century is now so deeply embedded in American academic culture that most people are not even conscious of it.”⁵⁵ This appears to be her main reason for supporting Yiannopoulos—a feeling that she has been marginalized because of her faith, and that discussion of her Christian faith is unwelcome in academic circles.⁵⁶

Brown’s defense of Yiannopoulos plays on her sense of being left out of the modern academy. Her feelings that the academy has not made space for her faith or for her conservative politics run through her writing on *Fencing Bear* and on Facebook. Brown struggled with Yiannopoulos’s rejection by leading conservative groups in late February 2017, and some of her blog entries portrayed him, too, as the victim of left-leaning conspiracies. The entry that attacked those on the Right

54. Brown, “Milo and Me,” *Fencing Bear*, 25 February 2017, <http://fencingbearatprayer.blogspot.com/2017/02/milo-and-me.html>, accessed 25 February 2017.

55. Brown, “Why Milo Scares Students.”

56. For Brown, discussing her Christian beliefs and “telling the truth” appear to promote limitations on women’s rights and the imposition of so-called traditional values. See Brown, “Bully Culture,” *Fencing Bear*, 21 February 2017, <http://fencingbearatprayer.blogspot.com/2017/02/bully-culture.html>, accessed 25 February 2017.

for “bullying” Yiannopoulos expressed this most starkly: “*Shame on all of you. You spineless cunts. The bullies are YOU.*”⁵⁷ Even her entry “Milo and Me” that acknowledges Yiannopoulos’s fierce rejection of victim narratives and attempts to shift away from them replicates the sense of persecution for both Yiannopoulos and for Brown herself.⁵⁸

Many of her blog posts note criticism Brown has received from her friends and colleagues as a result of her apparent Milophilia. Brown asked, “*Why do I see and hear such a different person from so many of my colleagues and friends?*” Indeed, this was a question that stumped many of her medievalist colleagues as Brown’s blogging in support of Yiannopoulos continued in the midst of the Right’s rejection of him in early 2017.⁵⁹ How, many wonder, can Brown repeatedly compare Yiannopoulos to Jesus?

Brown appears to believe that she is censored by her position as an academic, but she misses the fact that most of her colleagues agree that she has every right to express her ideas, whether in regards to faith or her affection for Yiannopoulos. As David Perry argued, “I am pretty much an absolutist when it comes to protecting ‘extramural utterances’, like tweets and blog posts, by academics. We’ve got to protect the right of academics like Brown to compare Milo to Jesus (really!!!) without threatening their jobs.”⁶⁰ But that protection does not prohibit criticism or others from commenting on those ideas in turn. What Brown does not like is that the unpopularity of her ideas means they are not accorded the position of power she would like them to have. Academia values ideas, but it does not have to value all ideas equally; there are

57. Brown, “Bully Culture.” This was the entry that sparked a great deal of online conversation.

58. Brown, “Milo and Me,” *Fencing Bear*, 25 February 2017, <http://fencingbearatprayer.blogspot.com/2017/02/milo-and-me.html>, (accessed 25 February 2017).

59. Brown, “The Milo Effect.”

60. David M. Perry, “Milo and the University of Chicago Medievalists,” *This Mess*, 22 February 2017, <http://www.thismess.net/search?q=chicago+medievalists>, accessed 25 February 2017. There are, of course, limitations when blogging turns to targeted harassment of students or colleagues as discussed in the previous article in this issue.

standards of evidence and quality of argument that cause academics to weigh the merit of various positions. Many have suggested that Brown's ideas reflected in the blog do not meet these standards. Why should they then be accorded greater space in the academy?

There is a possible problem when the professor's comments come not as "extramural utterances" but as statements made within the institution, or from the professor's position of authority. I do not think anyone has suggested that Brown abuses her position to act inappropriately—she has not used her blog to target or harass any individuals on her campus, in the profession, or in the broader community—but there has been some discussion that the University of Chicago Divinity School perhaps went too far in publishing her statements on Yiannopoulos in *Sightings*.⁶¹ This was the position of Brown's colleague Julie Orlemanski, in a letter to the "Dean of the Divinity School, to the Director of the Martin E. Marty Center, and to the editor of *Sightings*." Orlemanski challenged the publication of this essay on the grounds that it did not meet the editorial standards of *Sightings* and that its publication "shows no sensitivity to the inflammatory content of the article and the effects of this content on the university community." This is the sort of challenge all academics might consider worthy of consideration: Orlemanski's point was not that *Sightings* should have quashed the piece, but rather that they might have published it more thoughtfully, asking whether it met its standards and mission, or by soliciting more than one opinion and publishing a roundtable.⁶²

61. This distinguishes Brown from John McAdams of Marquette University, who attacked a female TA's teaching on his blog *Marquette Warrior* in a post picked up by conservative bloggers, which caused the TA to be harassed. Marquette's president suspended McAdams, who has sued the school. Conservative sites have argued that McAdams's comments on his blog are personal and thus not related to his scholarship or his position at Marquette, while his critics have argued that he represents himself as a Marquette professor on the blog and is thus accountable within the university for his comments there. NB. This article was completed before the September 2017 incident in which Brown was accused of using *Fencing Bear* to harass Dorothy Kim.

62. Orlemanski further pointed to a recent report "of the Diversity

Ultimately, what blogger Libby Anne asked was fair, and reflects many of the anxieties medievalists identified about Brown and Frantzen together: “Her denial of patriarchy does make me wonder a bit about how she teaches medieval history, at least when it comes to gender relations, and I sincerely hope her grasp on scholarship in that area is not as shallow as her writing here suggests.”⁶³ It is not only the extreme Right positions that concern her colleagues—such as those that deny women equality, control over their bodies, or freedom from body- and slut-shaming; it is the implications for Brown’s scholarship if her vision of medieval culture is so narrow and short-sighted. Brown defends herself by emphasizing that the blog is a casual space without the standards of an academic publication. But it reveals patterns of thoughts and methods of reaching conclusions that, again, trouble those who emphasize evidence, logic, and argumentation in the classroom and in scholarship.

Conclusions

Clearly Brown is deeply serious and sincere in her writing about faith and her connection to conservative politics. While she portrayed the blog in January 2016 as an alternate identity, as a space for “the fencing bear” to work through ideas, by February 2017 she had more comfortably united the fencing bear and herself. Her blog, and other writings on these subjects, demonstrate deep reflection and eagerness to engage others in expressing her perspectives. As her participation in the January 2016 SMFS conversation and her responses on her public Facebook posts

Advisory Council” showing that many members of the University of Chicago community “perceive the overall climate” as racist or sexist, and urged that a campus publication thus had a responsibility to consider how an article defending Yiannopoulos, who has been largely perceived as sexist, transphobic, and racist, might affect the University community. Orlemanski’s letter was published in Perry’s “Milo and the University of Chicago Medievalists” entry.

63. Libby Anne, “University of Chicago Professor Compares Milo Yiannopoulos to Jesus,” <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/lovejoyfeminism/2017/02/university-of-chicago-professor-uses-c-word-in-defense-of-milo-yiannopoulos.html>.

show, she is generally temperate, patient, and persistent in dealing with criticism. She has not, as far as I can tell, deleted any of these engagements or made any effort to hide them. She has linked to critical posts and responded to them with greater respect than we see from typical online responses. She has, however, grown increasingly comfortable with “blatantly offensive and demeaning language,” as Libby Anne put it, since her devotion to Yiannopoulos began.⁶⁴ Even her defense of his “spineless c[---]” comment, added as an update to the “Bully Culture” post in which it appeared, references Yiannopoulos’s influence. Rather than using her platform to draw attention to conservative causes or participate in debates as a conservative interlocutor, she has embraced the language of trolls and harassers to marginalize and demonize those with whom she disagrees. There is a celebratory atmosphere on her Facebook page as interlocutors are chased away by a salivating throng of friends and devotees.

What is palpable in these discussions, however, is that none devolved into a call for anyone to be assaulted, or otherwise harassed, and there was clearly articulated concern *not* to allow the conversation to become harassing, particularly among SMFS members. The focus remained on personal and scholarly responsibility. Threats, trolling: these came in, but only after there was more public attention, and it came from outside our community of medievalists. Regardless, we now recognize that this community does not universally foster respect for women, for feminism, for minorities, and that we have a long way to go in truly having the cozy community many of us imagined we enjoyed already, obviously incorrectly as several of its critics already knew.

Should we continue to reach out as public intellectuals? Of course. I suggest we must also continue to call out harassment and seek ways to protect ourselves and each other from online harassment. But all the while, we must be vigilant not to use the tools of harassment when we speak to our opponents, even if we do not limit ourselves with “civility” in those conversations. We must find new ways forward. The creation of online tools to help targets of harassment is important work. We might

64. Libby Anne, “University of Chicago Professor Compares Milo Yiannopoulos to Jesus.”

also consider Emily Temple-Wood's strategy of creating a Wikipedia article on women in science every time she receives a harassing email. She's a 20-something alumna of Loyola University Chicago—the same school from which Allen Frantzen recently retired. She has created hundreds of such pages so far.

We must also remember that these issues of “real-world” harassment and ideas that diminish feminism or support patriarchy are intertwined. Key to the MRA positions espoused by Frantzen, Brown, Yiannopoulos, and others, is a denial of rape or sexual harassment. Frantzen read and recommended an MRA author who denies the existence of rape.⁶⁵ Brown has on numerous occasions suggested that women “cry rape” after regretting supposedly consensual liaisons. Yiannopoulos believes that rape culture is a myth. This is important. These figures deny the existence of sexual violence against women, all the while contributing to a culture that permits and encourages it. They scapegoat women and the trans* community members who advocate for equality and justice, depicting them as oppressors of men and the Right. All three of them protest consequences for their own words, while denying responsibility for the harassment they normalize. As we see in the SMFS survey discussed in this issue, harassment is real in the academy, and its outspoken advocates are justifying its existence and encouraging its expansion. Rather than silencing academic feminists, however, this opposition should make us louder, make our networks more solid, make our communities more intersectional, and encourage our allies to be clearer in their support. While the SMFS survey demonstrated that our community has shared intense experiences of harassment, microaggressions, and bullying, and the Femfog affair showed us how insidious misogyny is in our community, the Brown affair surprised many colleagues by revealing unfortunate fractures in our ability to respond to misogyny when complicated by racism or expressed by someone we perceived as an ally.

Certainly, we have an obligation to treat all colleagues with respect. But if our colleagues are using or defending hate speech, must we not also name it as such? How are we to deal with harassment if we do not name it as harassment, or if we do not recognize ideas that limit and

65. Kim, “White-Academic Supremacy.”

exclude participants from the conversation? When our colleagues dismiss feminism, dismiss women, deny the reality of sexual assault, and defend and respect advocates of harassment, where is our responsibility? As we have seen, those who name these activities as harmful or unacceptable are subjected to personal attack, for which the only defense seems to be removing themselves from the internet or academic spaces. As a group we must think through better ways to emphasize respect for all persons and defense for the vulnerable among us. Speaking out for these two basic elements of collegiality should not breed further attacks.

Manhattan College