

The background of the cover is a medieval helmet, possibly a surcoat or a similar piece of armor, rendered in a dark, almost black color. The helmet is centered and occupies most of the frame. The background behind the helmet is a solid, vibrant red. The text is overlaid on the helmet and background.

the
United States
of
Medievalism

Edited by
Tison Pugh
and
Susan Aronstein

5 Three Vignettes and a White Castle: Knighthood and Race in Modern Atlanta

RICHARD UTZ

At first sight, few cities could have less of a link with the Middle Ages than Atlanta. Founded in 1837 to provide a train terminus connecting the seaport of Savannah with the Midwest, and about 3,500 miles and at least 500 years removed from Old Europe, Georgia's state capital must count as quintessentially modern. Nevertheless, an observant first-time visitor might notice a host of medieval signposts. Imagine the following scenario: At the baggage claim of the world's busiest airport, a colourful plasma screen displays to the visitor an invitation to be "swept away to an age of bravery and honor" and partake in "a feast of the eyes and appetite with all the splendor and romance" of medieval Spain at the Atlanta Castle of Medieval Times, a dinner theatre chain. A courtesy van, which treats her as if she were a noble lady at a medieval court, takes her to a downtown hotel, the Knights Inn. After a change of clothes, a Lyft driver delivers her to the Catholic Cathedral of Christ the King, where she attends her college roommate's wedding, which includes the celebration of the Eucharist, a sacramental ritual originating in the Fourth Lateran Church Council's decision on transubstantiation in 1215. The visitor particularly enjoys the performance of the Atlanta Early Music Alliance, which performs wedding songs from before 1800, accompanied by instruments painstakingly crafted according to pre-modern building instructions. As the guests exit the cathedral, a Knights of Columbus honour guard from the groom's home parish greets them, and guests are then bussed to the wedding reception at the High Museum of Art, in a space next to an exhibit entitled "Habsburg Splendor," which displays masterpieces from a family whose members served as emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, the highest secular authority in medieval and Renaissance Europe. As our visitor's day ends, she returns to her hotel. In the lobby, she picks up a brochure for the Georgia Renaissance Festival which, April through June, promises to transport her back to pre-modern England, on a thirty-two-acre village "filled with over 150 artisan craft shoppes, 10 stages of endless entertainment, wonderful pubs and taverns," and "giant roasted turkey legs, fish and

chips, hearty ales, mead and more." Finally, as she is almost ready to fall asleep, she researches Oglethorpe University, a private institution that offers to match flagship state tuition in all fifty states to high-performing student applicants. As Oglethorpe's magnificent Gothic Revival architecture appears on her laptop screen, she imagines her son, a high school junior, attending this kind of picturesque small liberal arts college.

This fictional narrative compresses a number of features from Atlanta's present and immediate past to reveal the omnipresence of medievalist features all over the city. However, most or all of these medievalist features and practices also exist in other cities and metropolitan areas in the United States: New York, Chicago, and Boston boast "medievalist" cathedrals and churches; several other cities in the US and Canada feature locations of Medieval Times; and examples of neo-Gothic architecture are synonymous with college campuses everywhere. What differentiates Atlanta and other cities in the Southeast from the rest of the country may be the degree to which questions of race are imbricated into the region's reception of medieval culture, as will become apparent in the following examination of the connections between medievalism and the nostalgia for a white past in post-Civil War Atlanta through three vignettes – the history of Stone Mountain; the conception, reception, and remediation of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*; and the city's 1906 Race Riots – along with Amos Rhodes's medieval fantasy castle, with its wistful paean to "the Lost Cause" etched in stained and painted glass.

Vignette One: Stone Mountain

In her brilliant 1998 study, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940*, Grace Elizabeth Hale offers a haunting description of Stone Mountain, a unique Atlanta-area geological formation that attracts several million visitors annually:

It rises, gray and ringing, 1,686 feet of solid granite, straight up from the rippling land of northern Georgia. The foothills surrounding the stone only quote its majesty and make its sudden presence, its hovering bald bulk visible as the pilgrim tops a rise in approach, that much more sublime. Scientists have estimated that at its slow rate of erosion, Stone Mountain will stand its eternal vigil little changed as modern civilization and perhaps even humanity itself disintegrate into dust. Nature has crafted a rock immense, singular, and enduring upon the landscape a mere sixteen miles from Atlanta.¹

Unsurprisingly, Stone Mountain's commanding presence as an isolated mountain, 1,686 feet tall and 3.8 miles in base circumference, has drawn humans to its proximity at least since North America's early Archaic age, circa 9,000 years ago, and European traders and slave raiders reached the location for the

first time in the late seventeenth century.² As Native Americans were gradually pushed out and the region became settled by Europeans, Stone Mountain gained increasing importance as a signpost of a regional racial identity that imagined its roots in medieval culture. This process of medievalist identity formation culminated in two early twentieth-century events.

Stirred by the nostalgic depiction of the nineteenth-century history of the (first) Ku Klux Klan in D.W. Griffith's 1915 silent film, *Birth of a Nation*, minister and activist William Simmons, together with sixteen other men, revived the Klan on Thanksgiving Day 1915. Atop Stone Mountain they ignited a flaming cross according to the following ritual:

The ceremony began around an altar made of stones contributed by each klansman. On this altar was erected a fiery cross in the halo of whose light the men, with uncovered heads, assumed the oath of the klan, and upon bended knees were dedicated with pure water to the service of country, homes and humanity. On the altar were placed a silk flag of the United States that was carried in the battle of Buena Vista of the Mexican War, a copy of the Bible [opened to Romans 12], the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, and the laws of the order. After an impressive prayer of dedication, the company was duly knighted with a saber that was used in the Battle of the Seven Pines of the Civil War. On its blade were rust marks from the blood of the North and the South. The saber was draped with a silk flag of the United States. Each klansman received the saber from the hands of the imperial wizard with both hands and pressed it to his lips, and said, "The klan, my country, my komrades, and my home."³

This event brought about the most powerful movement of the Far Right in US history, attracting perhaps as many as five million adherents to embrace its mélange of paramilitary paternalism, reactionary Evangelical populism, sexism, nativism, and racism.⁴ The link between the white staking of a claim to Stone Mountain with medieval knighthood was expressed by preacher, legislator, and lawyer Thomas Dixon Jr., whose 1905 novel, *The Clansman*, was the literary inspiration for Griffith's movie. Dixon had romanticized the nineteenth-century Klansmen's struggle in terms of the Klan's charter, which enshrined "Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism: embodying in its genius and principles all that is chivalric in conduct, noble in sentiment, generous in manhood and patriotic in purpose."⁵ So influential were Dixon's narratives that adolescents like fifteen-year-old Margaret ("Peggy") Mitchell, who would later write *Gone with the Wind*, organized neighbourhood children to dramatize his novels.⁶

Dixon, Griffith, Simmons, and many of their contemporaries viewed the Klan's actions in terms of a modern crusade, only this time mostly for an empire of white nativist masculinity, and they relied for foundational inspiration on what David Matthews has called the nineteenth-century "boom" of medievalism in the spheres of art, architecture, and poetry in Britain and most

other Anglophone countries.⁷ In the Southern United States, this boom had, by the early twentieth century, found almost omnipresent expression in nostalgic narratives in which “Christendom,” “Caucasian supremacy,” and “masculine strength” were memorialized as the central virtues of “the blessed days of the Old South.”⁸ “Yes, say what you may of it,” reminisced author and former Confederate army chaplain James Battle Avirett in 1901:

There was an engaging race in the chivalry that tempered even quixotism with dignity, in the piety which saved master and slave alike, in the charity that boasted not, in honor held above estate, in the hospitality that neither condescended nor cringed, in frankness and heartiness and wholesome comradeship, in the reverence paid to womanhood and the inviolable respect in which woman was held, the civilization of the old slave régime in the South has not been surpassed and perhaps will not be equaled among men.⁹

Southern masculinity relied on medieval conceptions of chivalry to bolster its claims.

If the first major event in the modern medievalist history of Stone Mountain, the founding of the (second) Ku Klux Klan, involved the South’s “chivalric sons,” the second one was orchestrated by the South’s “beautiful daughters.”¹⁰ In 1914, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, an organization of middle- and upper-class white women to sustain antebellum culture and extol Confederate heroism, settled upon the imposing butte outside Atlanta as the perfect site to memorialize the “Lost Cause.” Neatly complementary to the KKK’s goals regarding gender, UDC leaders opposed women’s suffrage, argued that women should be deferential to men and remain in the home, and exalted the plantation mistress as the ideal female role model.¹¹ In the UDC’s original plan for the memorial, Confederate general Robert E. Lee was to be displayed leading Confederate troops as well as KKK members across the mountain’s summit. However, various events, especially the two world wars, prevented its completion. It was only in 1970, in direct opposition to the rising tide of two decades of post-Second World War African American activism, that white politicians in the state of Georgia moved to finish and inaugurate the gigantic three-acre relief sculpture, 400 feet above the ground, featuring Confederate icons Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, and Jefferson Davis. Fittingly, the three Confederate cavaliers were depicted sitting on their favourite horses, Blackjack, Traveller, and Little Sorrel, who, during and after the Civil War, were as recognizable as their owners.

Vignette Two: *Gone with the Wind*

In the summer of 1949, Atlanta’s Peachtree Art Theatre showed Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s black-and-white movie *A Canterbury Tale*. Originally

released in Britain in 1944 as a patriotic war movie, a slightly revised version reached United States cinemas by the late 1940s. Based very loosely on Geoffrey Chaucer’s late medieval *Canterbury Tales*, the movie draws attention to the daily wartime experiences of regular citizens, specifically the friendship between two army sergeants (one American, one British) and a young woman from Kent. Clearly intended to exemplify and further solidify the friendship between these allied countries, the narrative shows the three young people collaborating to solve a series of strange attacks, in which a man pours glue on local women’s hair at a train station. They identify the culprit, a magistrate who wants to “encourage” the young women to remain faithful to their absent British boyfriends. The movie ends happily for all three protagonists and the magistrate, whom the three decide not to report to the authorities. The real “hero” of the movie is the country, which takes centre stage during the final scenes when English soldiers march towards their deployment areas for crossing the Channel to Normandy on D-Day.¹²

At 8:15 p.m., on 11 August 1949, a middle-aged Atlanta couple strolled towards the Peachtree Art Theatre, eager to enjoy the patriotic and superficially medievalist movie. As they crossed Peachtree Street, near Thirteenth Street, a taxi sped towards them. The woman stepped back; the man stepped forward. The off-duty taxi driver, who had had too much to drink, applied the brakes, skidded, and hit the woman. Although she was immediately taken to Grady Hospital, she never regained consciousness. During the next five days, crowds waited outside for news, and President Harry Truman, Georgia governor Herman Talmadge, and Atlanta mayor William Hartsfield all requested updates on her condition. The woman died on 16 August 1949.¹³

The woman was none other than Margaret Mitchell, a native and lifelong resident of Atlanta and one of the first female columnists at the *Atlanta Journal*, the South’s largest newspaper. One of her most brave and daring assignments as a young reporter was to agree to be strapped into a boatswain’s chair and then shoved out the window of the top floor of a fifteen-story Atlanta building to simulate what the workers on the Stone Mountain site would experience as they prepared the gigantic Confederate carving.¹⁴ Quite obviously, Mitchell’s views on the role of women and men did not conform with what the Ku Klux Klan, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, or numerous nineteenth-century Southern romantics promulgated and thought about gender roles and plantation-owning cavaliers and their ladies. In fact, critics generally agree that *Gone with the Wind*, which won the US National Book Award for Most Distinguished Novel (1936) and the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction (1937), presents a more nuanced picture of the Civil War South, at least regarding the roles of white women.

However, screenwriter Ben Hecht, in David O. Selznick’s film version of *Gone with the Wind* (1939), preferred to return to many of the banal clichés

about the Old South, including the depiction of the Southern plantation as an aristocratic, feudal utopia. In the opening intertitle, Hecht wrote for a worldwide audience to see and read:

There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton Fields called the Old South.
Here in this pretty world Gallantry took its last bow.
Here was the last ever to be seen of Knights and their Ladies Fair, of Master and Slave.
Look for it only in books, for it is no more than a dream remembered
A civilization gone with the wind ...

Alexandra Cook, in an essay comparing *Gone with the Wind* with Thomas Nelson Page's 1898 "Reconstruction" novel *Red Rock*, summarizes how Mitchell's intent was to challenge the mythical narrative of the South as a pre-industrial idyll populated by knights and ladies. According to Cook, Mitchell tried to depict crude upcountry North Georgia

"as it [really] was": "I certainly had no intention of writing about Cavaliers," she protests in a letter to historian Virginius Dabney, "and most of my characters, apart from the Virginia Wilkes, were yeoman farmers." Furthermore, while Mitchell does deploy the tradition of southern medievalism that Hecht's roll-up uses to such cloying effect, she bends its idioms to different ends. When Rhett Butler voices the traditional comparison between southern agrarianism and medieval feudalism, he is not sentimentalizing but lambasting the antiquated "southern way of living." While Mitchell compares aristocratic planter Ashley Wilkes to a knight, he is a distinctly enervated and ineffectual one, and though Scarlett may long for Ashley because to her he seems "the young girl's dream of the Perfect Knight," she herself is not one of Hecht's "Ladies Fair." In fact, Mitchell goes so far as to liken Scarlett herself to a knight. She is brave: Ashley reflects "he had never known such gallantry as the gallantry of Scarlett O'Hara going forth to conquer the world in her mother's velvet curtains and the tail feathers of a rooster." What is more, Mitchell relegates Ashley, the object of Scarlett's desire, to the position that was traditionally held by what W.S. Cash characterized as the lovely and exquisitely remote southern lady. Through such critiques and reversals Mitchell discovers new possibilities latent in the stereotypical retrograde fantasy of southern medievalism to which Hecht's text refers.¹⁵

Even if Mitchell may have questioned some of the facets of this fantasy in her novel, her advocacy for women's rights and agency excluded African Americans, whom she deprived of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual depth. Her innovative use of medieval tropes did not extend to all.

Vignette Three: Race Riots

Young Peggy Mitchell's formative years were spent in an Atlanta rife with racial conflict, and one specific childhood event would mark her more than any other:

It is the late afternoon of Monday, September 24, 1906, and five-year-old Peggy had spent the entire day nervous because she had heard that a race war was going on in other parts of Atlanta. While she wasn't sure about what exactly that means, she, her brother, and her father (the mother was away) heard gunshots not too far away from their two-story Victorian house in the fashionable Jackson Hill neighborhood. Their neighbor has come over to recommend that Eugene Mitchell, a prominent attorney and real estate developer, arm and ready himself in case any of the black rioters might attack the house.

Mark Bauerlein summarizes what happened after the neighbour left:

Eugene shuts the door and asks his daughter to leave the room. As the evening shadows lengthen, he retrieves a large ax and an iron water key, leaning against the front door and setting up a chair behind the window. Twilight falls and her father anticipates an all-night vigil, while Margaret retires to her bedroom upstairs. Everything is quiet outside, but she can't sleep. Eugene hears a footstep and turns to find Margaret holding a large sword kept in the house, offering it as another weapon of defense. He grasps it with care as she scampers back to her room, slipping underneath her bed and remaining awake the entire night, listening for sounds of an approaching invasion.¹⁶

Little Peggy's resorting to the knightly sword to help her father defend their home against potential Black rioters offers more than a symbolic link to her city's and region's racist medievalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. She would return to reading essential periods of her life as related to medievalia. For example, she described her desire to travel independently after divorcing her first husband in terms of the adventuresome knight-errancy of the character Dom Manuel in James Branch Cabell's *The Biography of the Life of Manuel*, a series of speculative novels, essays, and poems produced between 1901 and 1929. According to Darden Asbury Pyron, Mitchell's idea of female knighthood included "freedom of movement," the "very antithesis of women's roles: stability, home immobility, even sequestration."¹⁷ At the age of eight or nine, she wrote the story "Knighthood," which tells "of a beautiful and 'very rich' lady who lived in a valley between two high mountains. While everyone loved her, a 'wild rough knight' worshiped her, but she did not love him. Rejected he decided to seize her by force. A 'good but poor knight' lived nearby,

heard about the plot, and defended the lady. The story ended (with all its childish errors): 'Both knight drew there swords and rushed togeth. The good knight hit the bad one such a blow that he was killed. The lady fel in love with her rescueuer, and they were married.'¹⁸

The knights of the Atlanta chapter of the Klan would enshrine racist medievalism in their official charter some years after the 1906 race riots. White Southerners not only intended "to commemorate the holy and chivalric achievements of our fathers," but also saw it as their specific "sacred duty" to protect "womanhood" and "to maintain forever the God-given supremacy of the white race."¹⁹ The riots, which made the headlines in numerous national and international newspapers, began on the afternoon of Saturday, 22 September 1906, when newsboys in Atlanta's Five Point neighbourhood tried to attract customers with sensationalized headlines like "Third Assault on White Woman by a Negro Brute!," "Bold Negro Kisses White Girl's Hand!," and "Bright Mulatto Insults White Girls!"²⁰ These accusations, none of which were ever substantiated, and other similar headlines, stories, and cartoons appeared in the Atlanta papers as a by-product of an adversarial gubernatorial race. Both candidates, Clark Howell and Hoke Smith, two of Atlanta's most prosperous citizens and champions of white supremacy, did everything in their power to fault their opponent for being too friendly with the city's Black citizens. The *Atlanta Constitution*, published by Howell, accused Smith of courting "Negrophile Allies" by appointing Black people to federal positions during his time as secretary of the interior under Grover Cleveland.²¹ The *Atlanta Journal*, published by Smith, claimed to expose Howell's tendencies not to sufficiently oppose African American franchise and access to education.

It mattered little that the *Atlanta Independent*, a Black weekly, pointed out how both campaigns disenfranchised "every decent and helpful negro citizen and enfranchise[d] every venal and vicious white thug."²² Atlanta, the city that prided itself as an exception to the racially divided cities of the South, quickly succumbed to the lurid and dramatic news hype spread by the major newspapers: "With his yellow lips forming insulting phrases," the *Evening News* exclaimed, "Luther Frazier, a young negro, attacked Miss Orrie Bryan, the pretty 18-year-old daughter of Thomas L. Bryan, in her home." And the journalists urged on local men by asking, "What will you do to stop these outrages against the women? Shall these black devils be permitted to assault and almost kill our women, and go unpunished?"²³

As a result of this and other inflammatory rumours, white men and boys gathered all over Atlanta, attacked Black-owned businesses, pulled Black men out of streetcars and trolley cars, and hunted down others in the streets. Long-held fears, especially of Black sexual violence against white women, continued to lead to attacks by white mobs on Black citizens during the following days, even after the state militia entered the city to stop the violence.

In the end, about forty African Americans were killed, along with two whites. All the elements of an invented modern white knighthood had finally found a violent outlet, and in the only US city with a thriving African American middle class.

A White Castle

The career and aspirations of Amos Giles Rhodes (1850–1928) offer an excellent example of the ways in which deeply racist medievalism trickled down into the upwardly mobile white working class of modern Atlanta. Born in Henderson, Kentucky, in 1850, he came to Atlanta as a simple labourer for the L&N Railroad in 1875, owning only a horse and buggy and with \$75 in cash.²⁴ In 1876, he married Amanda Dougherty (1847–1927) and soon started earning good money by operating a chain of medium-sized furniture stores. By the 1890s, his entrepreneurial spirit – he is credited with inventing the instalment payment plan, allowing customers to make weekly payments on purchases²⁵ – had turned the company into a large furniture business and made him one of the wealthiest and most prominent citizens of the quickly growing modern city, a city which, in part because of its modernity and rapid growth, offered better living conditions and career opportunities not only for whites but also for Black workers and businesses than any other city in the late nineteenth-century South. Between the 1890s and 1910, Atlanta's population soared from 80,000 to 150,000; the Black population was approximately 9,000 in 1880 and reached 35,000 by 1900. This precipitous growth put pressure on municipal services, increased job competition between Black and white workers, heightened class distinctions, and led the city's white leadership to respond with restrictions intended to control the daily behaviour of the growing working class, with mixed success. Such conditions caused concern among elite whites, who feared the social intermingling of the races, and led to an expansion of racial segregation, particularly in the separation of white and Black neighbourhoods, including separate seating areas for public transportation.²⁶

On the white side of Atlanta, Amanda and Amos Rhodes had become enamoured with living the medievalist dream. While on a leisurely boat trip down the Rhine River during a European vacation, they determined to build a new private residence in a similar style. They began multiple land purchases to create an estate of 114 acres along one of the most highly prized Atlanta thoroughfares, Peachtree Street.²⁷ In 1902, four years before the Atlanta race riots, construction began on a large private castle they originally referred to as *Le Rêve* ("The Dream") but later decided to call Rhodes Hall. For maximum visibility, the couple situated it on a slight rise at a prominent curve of Peachtree Street. The white granite for the mansion was quarried from the same Stone Mountain that would, in 1915, become the site for the founding of the second

Ku Klux Klan and for which, also in 1915, the Daughters of the Confederacy would commission the carving of Confederate icons Lee, Jackson, and Davis.

By the time Rhodes Hall was built, the Rhineland castle style the Rhodes envisioned had passed out of fashion, and architect Willis F. Denny II (1874–1905), who also designed Atlanta's First United Methodist and St. Mark's United Methodist churches in the style of the popular Gothic Revival, created an example of Victorian Romanesque Revival, which was intended to adapt the medieval Romanesque style to the design of a twentieth-century private home. As so often in modern medievalism, the Victorian Romanesque Revival typically made only superficial reference to the actual architecture of the medieval period. The style, best exemplified by San Francisco's St. Mark's Lutheran Church (1895), Chicago's Marshall Field's Wholesale Store (1887), and Sydney's Queen Victoria Building (1898), featured buildings of substantial weight and mass; a rock-faced foundation; masonry walls highlighted by rock-faced arches, lintels, and sills; semicircular arches in windows, doors, and porches; polychrome masonry; and tower roofs topped with finials.

Owing to its massive and expensive construction requirements, the Romanesque Revival style was normally employed for grand public buildings such as courthouses, churches, libraries, university buildings, department stores, and train stations. Rhodes Hall, which cost the Rhodes family \$50,000 to build in 1904 (at least \$6 million in today's currency), is an exception to this general picture. According to contemporary records, the house was an immediate success in the Atlanta papers and social scene. One author remarked that "in the war of wealth and opulence waged along Peachtree Street at the time, it can probably be said that Amos Rhodes' fortress won hands down."²⁸ And it won this "war" not only through its typically Victorian obsession of connecting with the medieval past, or its display of exotic scenes from the Rhodeses' beloved Florida, but also by weaving into these temporally and spatially removed features the most advanced contemporary technology. Over 300 light bulbs illuminated the house, producing a blaze of light uncommon in 1904, and most rooms boasted electric call buttons as well as a state-of-the-art security alarm.

At the very centre, visually and symbolically, of the castle on Peachtree is a massive mahogany staircase, which leads up to the private and much less expensively decorated areas of the Rhodes home. The staircase, for which the architect used mahogany imported from the West Indies, attracts a visitor's eyes to a three-panel series of stained and painted glass. The owners and their architect created a church-like shrine in these panels to the "Lost Cause," romanticizing the rise and fall of the Confederacy, from the first shots initiating the Battle of Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861 to the Battle of Appomattox, after which General Robert E. Lee's army surrendered on 9 April 1865. The windows were executed by the brothers Theodore and Ludwig Von Gerichten, who, with studios in Columbus, Ohio, and Munich, Germany, created windows for more

than 800 churches in the United States and who were recognized with a grand prize and several gold medals at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904.²⁹

The glass panels, which vary somewhat in length because of the space they cover from the bottom to the top of the staircase, consist of two longer sections depicting recognizable seminal historical moments: the election of Jefferson Davis as president of the Confederate States of America (1861); dramatic battle scenes and nostalgic scenes of the Old South; and medallion-like portraits of Confederate politicians and generals, including opponents of Reconstruction and members of the first Ku Klux Klan. To ensure a lifelike depiction, the portraits were based on drawings, paintings, and photographs.³⁰ Each window is crowned by rounded arch illustrations of abstract national virtues, such as the Constitution supported by Wisdom, Justice, and Moderation, or mottoes and seals celebrating various Confederate states.³¹ The window panels with scenes from the Old South provide perhaps the most direct commentary on race relations in Atlanta between 1890 and 1930. The numerous medievalizing gestures in Rhodes Hall conflate and conjoin the medieval past, the antebellum past, and the twentieth century. For the owners and visitors of the residence, these three time periods inhabit the same space.

One panel exudes happiness and pride: a Confederate soldier on a horse, probably an officer, gallantly waves goodbye to his wife, son, and daughter, who return his gesture. Portrayed in the dark, on the left of a stately manor house and close to the shade of some trees, stand six Black figures in beige work clothes. They watch the departure scene without observable emotion. Their hands are at their hips or down on the side of their bodies, but their motionless and unfree status provides the symbolic backdrop in front of which the gallant manhood and freedom of the white male hero may be portrayed. In a second window panel, clearly situated years later, a bearded patriarch with a cane stands by as his wife greets their son who, now without his steed, has returned at the end of the war. Their yard is overgrown with ivy and other abundant flora, and an askew shutter on the Classical Revival antebellum plantation manor communicates that the place has seen better days. The cavalier's wife and children are nowhere to be seen, and all slaves are gone. If what can be inferred about Amos Rhodes's taste for the Romantic and exotic in other rooms is any indication – his own favourite room in the building features paintings with "noble native savages" as idealized objects of another bygone era in the Atlanta region – he felt a deep yearning for a time when medieval knights and ladies (that is, Southern gentlemen and their belles) and medieval peasants and serfs (that is, African American slaves) all knew their "rightful" place. Therefore, it is no surprise that the final panel with scenes from the Old South focuses on what the Confederate officer was willing to fight and die for. It is a bucolic still life of four African Americans occupied with providing the economic foundation for the Southern economy and lifestyle: they are picking cotton. The packed

basket in the foreground and the ample future harvest still on the healthy cotton bushes celebrate an agrarian and anti-industrialist economy built on the backs of slave and low-wage labour.

Two generations after the American Civil War, Rhodes Hall celebrated the Confederate heritage and well represented the medievalist fortress mentality of Atlanta's white citizens, as would the founding of the second Klan on Stone Mountain in 1915, the writing and reception of Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* in the 1930s and 1940s, and the race riots of 1906.³²

Medieval Atlanta Today

Most twenty-first-century visitors to Atlanta will never see Rhodes Hall. No longer the commanding social and geographic presence it used to be until the 1930s, it is now dwarfed by the nearby Equifax Building, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, Invesco Global Asset Management, and WSB-TV News 2. Its romantic alterity as a former medievalist private residence now impresses a handful of visitors during the weekly building tours and, more importantly, the guests at numerous weddings, holiday parties, and corporate events. The nonprofit Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation supports the successful renovation of the castle via its Cupid at the Castle program, which boasts having received the Bride's Choice Awards since 2012.³³ Careful to avoid attracting white supremacist attention on the one hand and desirous to invite wedding parties on the other, the newly designed 2018 website for Rhodes Hall omits any sensitive issues. The closest it comes to revealing its troubling historical connections is when the edifice is said to exemplify "the depth of feeling for the 'Lost Cause' as the old heroes passed away."³⁴ Instead of historical transparency, the Georgia Trust would rather focus on the future, specifically its laudable commitment to adopting greener practices and policies and conserving energy.³⁵ And so couples from all kinds of racial backgrounds will continue to have their wedding photos taken in the castle, blissfully unaware that the church-like portrait gallery around them includes the likes of Robert Toombs, an impassioned opponent of Reconstruction; Nathan Bedford Forrest, Grand Wizard of the (first) Ku Klux Klan; and John B. Gordon, head of the (first) Ku Klux Klan in the state of Georgia.

The Margaret Mitchell House belongs among the Atlanta attractions managed under the umbrella of the Atlanta History Center. Like the managers of Rhodes Hall, its administrators are careful not to bother site visitors with sensitive issues and instead centre its 2018 activities and exhibits on "lighter" topics: "Margaret Mitchell: A Passion for Character" (career as a reporter, girlhood writings, philanthropy), "The Making of a Film Legend: *Gone with the Wind*" (transformation of the novel into the film classic), and "Stars in Atlanta: The Premiere of *Gone with the Wind*" (events around the world premiere of

December 1939).³⁶ However, as a museum, research facility, and centre for educational and public outreach to the citizens of Atlanta and all other visitors, the Atlanta History Center also provides a host of opportunities to learn about the less glorious aspects of the city's and region's history, including the "Confederate Monument Interpretation Guide," which critically examines "the 'Lost Cause,' the notion that white Southerners fought a just cause in the Civil War and won morally, even if they lost on the battle field."³⁷

While owned by the State of Georgia, Stone Mountain is now operated by Herschend Family Entertainment, which is headquartered in Atlanta and operates dozens of other theme parks and attractions throughout the United States, including Dollywood (Pigeon Forge, Tennessee), Silver Dollar City (Branson, Missouri), Pirate's Voyage (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina), and the Harlem Globetrotters International (Phoenix, Arizona). Except for its location – 1000 Robert E. Lee Boulevard, Stone Mountain, Georgia – the company has cleansed its website and public relations materials from any reference to the problematic moments surrounding the site. The "History and Nature" section of the website, for example, focuses on

the fascinating geology and ecology of Stone Mountain. Visitors can explore the gallery, experiencing everything from interactive science exhibits to the life-size cave with a video about the origin of the mountain. Guests can also view the educational documentary "The Battle for Georgia – a History of the Civil War in Georgia," which has been updated to a large screen video format in the new Confederate Hall Theater. The 25 minute film ... features hundreds of archival photographic images and reenactment footage from the Civil War. In addition, guests can learn how the Confederate Memorial carving came to be by viewing the 11-minute feature film "The Men Who Carved the Mountain."³⁸

The historical timeline elides the founding of the second Ku Klux Klan for the year 1915. For that year it only mentions the first plans for a memorial by the United Daughters of the Confederacy.³⁹ For 1963, it elides Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, in which King specifically asked to "let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!" and rather mentions the opening of the Antebellum Plantation.⁴⁰ Since taking over operations in 1998, Herschend Family Entertainment renovated Confederate Hall as an Environmental Education Center and a museum on Stone Mountain's geology and ecology and added an Indian Festival & Pow Wow, an Outdoor Quarry Exhibit, a Pumpkin Festival, a Southern Christmas (later named Stone Mountain Christmas), and a Kid's Spring Break Festival. As with Rhodes Hall, a focus on "green" activities seems to have been chosen to engage with a positive future instead of a contentious past. The only remaining medievalist connection, limited to friendly Highland Dancing, Piping and Drumming, and Clan Challenge

Athletic events, is the annual Highland Games.⁴¹ Perhaps it is the aggressive silencing of any and all historical engagement with Stone Mountain's Klan history that makes it possible for the festival's "Clan Registration Information" to state, clearly without irony: "It is all about the clans after all. Seriously, the Stone Mountain Highland Games would not exist if it were not for the Clans."⁴² The Highland Games were first held at Stone Mountain in 1972, the same year in which the Confederate carving was finally completed.

Despite all efforts to turn Stone Mountain into an anodyne tourist attraction, it is simply too big and public not to remain a major stumbling block in Atlanta's path towards (actively) forgetting its modern white supremacist past. With events similar to those of approximately one hundred years ago, a white supremacist political movement developed concomitant with the primaries and presidential campaign in 2015 and 2016. The shooting of nine African American churchgoers by an avowed white separatist on 17 June 2016 in Charleston and, in response, civil rights groups' call for the eradication of Confederate symbols, led to hundreds of demonstrations and counterdemonstrations all across the nation. In Georgia, the NAACP proposed that the Confederate carving be removed from Stone Mountain. Several other groups and organizations attempted to revive the Confederate history of Stone Mountain and invited "every able bodied soul of our race" to defend "these lands of green glens, rolling hills, and deep glades" from "being purposely flooded with hordes of raping scoundrels."⁴³ A number of events like "Rock Stone Mountain" (2016) united several hundred neo-Nazis, Klan members, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Neo-Confederate Leaguers, and members of the heavily armed Georgia Security Force III% at Stone Mountain; it also brought together numerous counter-protesters (NAACP, Black Lives Matter, All Out ATL), many of whom also realized the historical symbolism of the site. Unlike at the Unite the Right rally at Charlottesville, Virginia, on 11 and 12 August 2017, which abounded with medievalist connections, symbols, slogans, and memes (for example, Odal rune, Black Sun, Iron Cross, Valknut, Deus Vult crosses), the demonstrations at Stone Mountain showed no symbols or gear that specifically referenced medievalia.⁴⁴ Could it be that Atlanta has overcome its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century desire for deriving its identity via various forms of medievalism?

Were history our guide, we should be careful with such predictions. In a 2012 landmark study, Nico Voigtländer and Hans-Joachim Voth showed how persistent medieval anti-Jewish prejudice has proved over centuries. Using data on plague-era pogroms as an indicator for local and regional medieval antisemitism, they could reliably predict violence against Jews in the 1920s, votes for the Nazi party, deportations after 1933, and attacks against synagogues, thus revealing a continuity of cultural traits spanning 600 years.⁴⁵ Therefore, those entrusted with the preservation of Atlanta and Georgia history may want to learn

a lesson from the creative way in which the congregation of Washington National Cathedral dealt with a series of Confederate War-themed stained-glass windows in their place of worship. The windows depict Generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson as exemplary Christians, representations that present a serious problem for the contemporary members of this active place of worship. Cathedral leaders agreed to remove all the Confederate flag images in the windows and to replace them with plain glass. The images were originally installed in 1953 after lobbying by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, an organization founded ten years before the construction of Atlanta's Rhodes Hall and dedicated to heroic readings of the Civil War and the "Lost Cause." Before executing these changes, however, the National Cathedral resolved to make this process a public moment of communal learning and mourning, with discussions and presentations over an entire year. Thus, instead of "simply taking the windows down and going on with business as usual," the removal process served to "provide an opportunity ... to begin to write a new narrative on race and racial justice at the Cathedral and perhaps for [the] nation."⁴⁶ There are currently no plans for a similarly conscious public engagement with Atlanta's past.

NOTES

- 1 Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Random House, 1998), 241.
- 2 See Bruce E. Stewart, "Stone Mountain," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/geography-environment/stone-mountain>, last updated 31 Oct. 2016 (accessed 31 Aug. 2018); and Lorraine Boissoneault, "What Will Happen to Stone Mountain, America's Largest Confederate Memorial?" *Smithsonian*, 22 Aug. 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-will-happen-stone-mountain-americas-largest-confederate-memorial-180964588>.
- 3 *The Georgian*, 27 Nov. 1915, quoted in Mark Bauerlein, *Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta, 1906* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2001), 288.
- 4 The fullest historical analysis of the chivalric Klan is Nancy McLean's *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- 5 Thomas Dixon Jr., *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905; repr., Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 320.
- 6 Andrew Leiter, "Thomas Dixon, Jr.: Conflicts in History and Literature," *Documenting the American South*, https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/dixon_intro.html (accessed 13 Sept. 2018). As an adult, in a letter to Dixon dated 10 Aug. 1936, Mitchell wrote, "I was practically raised on your books, and love them very much"

- (Margaret Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind" Letters, 1936–1949, ed. Richard Harwell [New York: Macmillan, 1976], 52–3).
- 7 David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), 119–21.
 - 8 James Battle Avirett, *The Old Plantation: How We Lived in Great House and Cabin before the War* (New York: Neely, 1901), 8–9. As early as 1857, Avirett stated that it was "a mistake to say that the age of chivalry has passed" ("Knights and Courtly Ladies: The Romantic Ultimate," in *The Romantic South*, ed. Harnett Kane [New York: Howard-McCann, 1961], 182).
 - 9 Avirett, *Old Plantation*, 19–20. Another example is found in David R. Hundley's *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York: Henry B. Price, 1860): "The gentlemen of the South owe their physical perfectness in part, doubtless, to those mailed ancestors who followed Godfrey and bold Coeur de Lion to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre or to those knightly sires, may be, who, like Front de Boeuf, and most of the other gallant gentlemen of those days, were great with battleaxes" (29).
 - 10 Avirett, *Old Plantation*, 160.
 - 11 Angelo Esco Elder, "United Daughters of the Confederacy," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, last updated 30 July 2018, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/united-daughters-confederacy> (accessed 31 Aug. 2018).
 - 12 For a critical reading of the movie in the context of medievalism, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 153–61.
 - 13 See Richard Cavendish, "The Author of *Gone with the Wind* Dies," *History Today* 49, no. 8 (1999): 51–2.
 - 14 See the entry on sculptor Gutzon Borglum in Anita Price Davis, *The Margaret Mitchell Encyclopedia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 41–2. Mitchell's article, "Hanging over Atlanta in Borglum's Swing," was published in the *Atlanta Journal* on 5 May 1923.
 - 15 Alexandra Cook, "Critical Medievalism and the New South: *Red Rock* and *Gone with the Wind*," *South Central Review* 30, no. 2 (2013): 32–52, at 32.
 - 16 Bauerlein, *Negrophobia*, 192–3.
 - 17 Darden Asbury Pyron, *Southern Daughter: The Life of Margaret Mitchell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 195–8.
 - 18 Pyron, *Southern Daughter*, 49.
 - 19 *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1921), 5. On the strong role of Protestantism for the programmatic goals of the second Klan, see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).
 - 20 A detailed narrative of the events surrounding the 1906 race riot can be found in Gary Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 69–77.
 - 21 For additional information and the role of newspaper articles in inciting violence, see "The Atlanta Race Riot of 1906," PBS, <https://pba.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/d537b305-c6b0-4f50-8139-d603fa7ddf18/the-atlanta-race-riot-of-1906> (accessed 27 Feb. 2021).
 - 22 *Atlanta Independent*, 6 Jun. 1906; quoted in Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn*, 73.
 - 23 *Atlanta Evening News*, 22 Sept. 1906; quoted in Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn*, 73–4.
 - 24 Shorter versions of this section on Rhodes Hall were previously discussed in Richard Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto* (Kalamazoo, MI: ARC Humanities Press, 2017), 53–68; and Richard Utz, "Cupid at the Castle: Romance, Medievalism, and Race at Atlanta's Rhodes Hall," *Public Medievalist*, 4 Apr. 2017, <https://www.publicmedievalist.com/rhodes-hall>.
 - 25 See the entry on the "Rhodes Family Papers" at the Atlanta History Center, <https://aspace-atlantahistorycenter.galileo.usg.edu/repositories/2/resources/282> (accessed 15 Sept. 2018).
 - 26 Newcomers to Atlanta often marvel at how so many of the city's thoroughfares frequently and unexpectedly change names. The cause is, as Kevin M. Kruse documents, that white Atlantans tried very hard to avoid having a "black address" (*White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005], 62).
 - 27 On Peachtree Street and Rhodes Hall as one of its most spectacular residences, see William Bailey Williford, *Peachtree Street, Atlanta* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 100–1. The official Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation website for Rhodes Hall contains basic information on the history and current use of the building: <http://www.rhodeshall.org> (accessed 15 Sept. 2018).
 - 28 Cited according to the entry on "Rhodes Memorial Hall" by the City of Atlanta's Urban Design Commission, <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=427> (accessed 25 Aug. 2018). For an informative overview, see also the entry "Rhodes Hall" in the Society of Architectural Historians *Archipedia*, <https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/GA-01-121-0045> (accessed 16 Sept. 2018).
 - 29 On the medievalist stained- and painted-glass productions of the von Gerichten brothers, see John M. Clark, *German Village Stories behind the Bricks* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2015), 140–3.
 - 30 The portraits show Albert Sidney Johnston; Nathan Bedford Forrest; Joseph Eggleston Johnston; Franklin Buchanan; Raphael Semmes; Josiah Tattnall; Howell Cobb; Alexander Hamilton Stephens; Robert Augustus Toombs; Clement Anselm Evans; John B. Gordon; Joseph Wheeler Jr.; Marcellus A. Stovall; Pierre Gustave Toulant Beauregard; and James Longstreet. Most of them were born in or had some other connection with the state of Georgia.
 - 31 I am indebted to Dr. John Turman, novelist and tour guide at Rhodes Hall, who, on 14 May 2013, provided me with an eleven-page document, "The Rise and Fall

- of the Confederacy: Art Glass Windows in Rhodes Memorial Hall," which includes a detailed description of all windows.
- 32 After Amanda Rhodes's death in 1927 and Amos Rhodes's in 1928, their children deeded the house to the State of Georgia, specifying that the property should be used for "historic purposes." Between 1930 and 1965, the building served as the home of the State Archives. (Margaret Mitchell conducted research there.) In 1983, the nonprofit Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation signed a long-term lease with the State of Georgia. Serving as headquarters for the Georgia Trust, Rhodes Hall has undergone significant restoration, most importantly the return of the original mahogany staircase and stained-glass windows in 1990.
 - 33 See "Event Rentals," Rhodes Hall, <http://www.rhodeshall.org/event-rentals> (accessed 17 Sept. 2018).
 - 34 See "History & Tours," Rhodes Hall, <http://www.rhodeshall.org/history-tours> (accessed 17 Sept. 2018).
 - 35 See "Going Green," Rhodes Hall, <http://www.rhodeshall.org/a-greener-rhodes-hall> (accessed 17 Sept. 2018).
 - 36 "Margaret Mitchell House," Atlanta History Center, <http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/explore/destinations/margaret-mitchell-house> (accessed 17 Sept. 2018).
 - 37 "Confederate Monument Interpretation Guide," Atlanta History Center, <https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/research/confederate-monuments> (accessed 24 Sept. 2019).
 - 38 "Historical & Environmental Education Center," Stone Mountain Park, <http://www.stonemountainpark.com/Activities/History-Nature/Confederate-Hall> (accessed 18 Sept. 2018).
 - 39 "History," Stone Mountain Park, <http://www.stonemountainpark.com/About/History> (accessed 18 Sept. 2018).
 - 40 Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream," <https://www.archives.gov/files/social-media/transcripts/transcript-march-pt3-of-3-2602934.pdf> (accessed 27 Feb. 2021).
 - 41 "Stone Mountain Highland Games," www.smhg.org (accessed 18 Sept. 2018).
 - 42 "Clan Registration Information," <http://www.smhg.org/clans.php> (accessed 18 Sept. 2018). Several of the organizations affiliated with the Stone Mountain Highland Games, including the Claranald Trust for Scotland, are actively involved in medieval reenactment and living history events.
 - 43 "A Mission Statement," #Rock Stone Mountain (blog), 10 Feb. 2016, <https://rockstonemountain14.blogspot.com/2016/02/a-mission-statement.html> (accessed 18 Sept. 2018).
 - 44 The Klan's Blood Drop Cross could be seen as an exception. However, as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) explains, this symbol's complex modern history does not include overt medieval connections. See the ADL's entry on "Blood Drop Cross," <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/blood-drop-cross> (accessed 15 Sept. 2018).

- 45 Nico Voigtländer and Hans-Joachim Voth, "Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127, no. 3 (2012): 1339–92.
- 46 Statement by the Reverend Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, the cathedral's canon theologian, on the cathedral's website: "Cathedral to Explore Racial Justice through Public Forums, Arts, Worship," Washington National Cathedral, 8 June 2016, <https://cathedral.org/press-room/cathedral-to-explore-racial-justice-through-public-forums-arts-worship> (accessed 3 July 2019).