

CARANTES NEWSLETTER

LOGO BY FORFEDA

Hello, and welcome to *Carantes*!

**HAPPY PRIDE
MONTH! ALL
LOVE TO OUR
GAY, LESBIAN,
BI, TRANS AND
NON-BINARY
FRIENDS
EVERYWHERE!**

We are tremendously appreciative to see how many people, from so many different backgrounds, have signed up for this mailing list.

As a brief reminder, *Carantes* is a dispersed academic reading and working group focused on furthering the understanding of Fascism and the Far-Right in the broad context of Celtic Studies. We hope to come together to make Celtic Studies a field that can develop an informed, critical understanding of past mistakes, and create an environment in which we can protect and support each other, with particular care for the most vulnerable among us.

Considering the nature of what brings us together, we've tried to design *Carantes* to allow each individual member to engage on their own time, according to their own schedule and emotional space.

LOGISTICS



On the 15th of every month, we will send out an email in which we will suggest two readings and provide some notes on the material to help prompt your own thoughts or start your own discussions. We aim to have at least one reading each month be freely available online to make sure that non-academics and scholars who do not have access to academic libraries will be able to participate. However, to forewarn, we cannot guarantee that we will always be able to find a relevant, freely available reading.

If you (or a reading group of your own) have any thoughts that you would like to share with the wider group, **we are happy to include comments on the readings in the following month's email**, in which the logistics section will be much shorter. If you specifically tell us that you would like to have your name associated with your comment, we are happy to name you in the email. However, we will operate under the assumption of anonymity for our members, so if you do not let us know that you would like your comment connected to you, we will not list your name, or we will pick a random one from one of the medieval annals or a text such as *Cóir Anmann*, or the Welsh Triads.

CALENDAR

- July 15th: next newsletter!
- August 6th: Lughnasadh Quarter Day Meeting!



Four times a year, roughly around **each of the Quarter Days** (Samhain, Beltaine, Lughnasadh, Imbolc), we will hold a two-hour online meeting, aiming to pick times and days that will be as accessible as possible for members across the world. These meetings will be structured as academic seminars (gently guided discussions) where we all come together to talk about the readings covered that month, and any other important or relevant topics, with gentle moderation from members of the steering committee. The Samhain meeting might be slightly different, as we hope to arrange for a speaker to come and give a talk on a relevant subject.

We hope that this system will work smoothly and help everyone engage on their own terms and according to their own availability and capacity. However, this will likely be refined and changed over time, and we would be happy to hear any thoughts that you might have as time goes on and we see this system in practice. You can also suggest readings, if any come to mind.



As a last organisational matter, many of you have expressed interest in being more active within the organisation and to that end **we would like to help you facilitate the formation of your own working groups** that can meet more regularly than the open quarter day meetings. Through long discussion and our own past experiences we have decided that this format is more likely to endure, more flexible, and less likely to create the problems that can affect larger groups. With fewer people you can set up your own schedules, pick your own readings if you wish, and not have to answer to anyone. We think these more regular meetings will prove particularly helpful for the quarter days when we all come together, but also foster environments in which every anti-fascist perspective is able to be expressed, discussed and valued.

So how do we help you with that? Well, any way you need us to. Maybe you are part of an institution and already know others who might be interested in joining a working group, but you are unfamiliar with how to go about it. In that case we will be happy to provide guidance in the setup process. You can use our monthly suggested readings and guiding questions to help spark discussion, and we can also provide a longer list of suggested readings if that would help. Or maybe you are an isolated anti-fascist who is seeking such a community. In that case, we can put you in contact with others in your situation who are also looking for a working group.

You can contact us by email at this address and let us know what you would like to do, following which we will have a chat about the best way to get you started on this difficult, exciting, and vitally important path.

This introduction aside, on to the actual readings for this month! You can read these on your own or with your own working group. We've provided notes from our own discussion of these articles to help spark thoughts and/or conversations.

Next month, on July 15th, we will suggest readings to be discussed together at our quarterly Lughnasadh meeting, which will take place August 6th (more information forthcoming).

READINGS & NOTES FROM OUR DISCUSSION

- Rambaran-Olm, Mary, M. Breann Leake, and Micah James Goodrich, 'Mediaeval Studies: the Stakes of the Field,' *Postmedieval* 11 (2020): 356-370. (1)
- Fuentes, Juan Francisco, 'Totalitarian Language "Creating Symbols to Destroy Words",' *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 8.2 (2013): 45-66. (2)

"**Medieval Studies: the Stakes of the Field**' makes insightful observations that encourage us to learn from the current situation in Medieval Studies that scholars such as Dr Rambaran-Olm outline in this piece. The paper draws attention to past failures to address the underlying White Supremacy in medieval scholarship and challenges scholars to critically examine what we care about, and who might feel unwelcome in this academic context. It is an excellent summary of how the situation has gotten as bad as it has in our sibling field, and we should look to these conversations as we begin our own self-reflection.

In our discussion of the article, we were particularly struck by the problem of how, when scholarly spaces have tried to make themselves open for dialogue and discussion of any perspective, they have sometimes, quite unintentionally, created environments where bigotry is given a space to exist under the pretence of academic neutrality. And, in turn, when this remains unchecked, bigotry in academic spaces pushes out or silences vulnerable voices. The following questions arose for us: as antifascists, what does it mean for us to practise tolerance? **How do we avoid the tolerance paradox? Is refusal to engage with fascists a viable strategy?** For those of you in Celtic Studies, or in your own fields, what problems listed in the article do you recognize, and/or have you witnessed yourself?

"**Totalitarian Language**' is a theoretical discussion examining how fascist movements create meaningless language fueled by emotions to bypass any kind of truth. The reliance on emotion in these moments, on manufacturing a 'feeling' that supersedes reality, is something many of us have a good deal of experience with now, and that we will discuss at length in future months. As you read, you can keep an eye on the linguistic mechanisms Fuentes describes that make fascism so efficient. **What is totalitarian logic, for instance?** How does it work? How does the usual balance of sound and meaning shift?

As the article deals with the main fascist regimes of the 20th century, you can also ask yourself if everything being described is still relevant. What does fascism look like today? **How has it changed from what Fuentes describes? What has stayed the same?**

In our discussion, we flagged the importance of these questions from our perspectives as scholars. To heavily simplify things, scholars discuss the truth or what might have been true or could have been true. With postmodern currents of thought, questions of subjectivity and objectivity have been broached, and what do these mean for us in our work as antifascists and/or scholars? Is it possible to separate ourselves from our topics of study? And if not, if we are always looking for something of ourselves in our work, **how do we prevent the histories and cultures we study from being used as fuel for movements that look into the past only to find the justification for their bigotry and hateful agendas?**

(1) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41280-020-00205-5>

(2) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43610944>

We think it is a great first step to recognize this difficult relationship to truth and self, because it is what fascists use to their own advantage, when it is not well understood. To call out the mechanisms by which ‘vibes’ come to absolutely supersede fact, we need to understand what a fact is, and what are its merits and its limits. Simply put, we need to be self-aware regarding our own work, and question whether the language of fact is useful when engaging with fascist rhetoric. **Is it enough for us to fact-check? What more can or should we do?**

And lastly, we also need to be deliberate in amplifying voices that go too often unheard. Our goal as antifascists cannot just be the rejection of hate, we also have to foster inclusivity within the field. This is why we are named Carantes, the proto-celtic for “friends”. This is first and foremost a space of support and inclusivity. We encourage you to examine what the work of inclusion looks like to you? What can you change? **Whose voices can you seek out to question your own biases and grow beyond them?**

For now, that is all from us here at the Carantes Steering Committee. We hope you are all doing great in this beautiful month of June, and please feel free to contact us if you have any reactions, thoughts or concerns, or if you would rather not get any more emails.

Until next time, keep well and safe,
And thank you for doing this work with us,
Your friends at



CARANTES

EMAIL US! CARANTESWG@PROTON.ME
OR FIND US ON TWITTER @CARANTESWG

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