Exploring the Middle Ages through Digital Humanities:
Cyprus, Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean

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Synopsis (100 words)
I am currently developing web portals that aggregate resources (text and image data) concerning interactions between societies during the "middle ages" (500-1500CE) under the auspices of the Global Middle Ages Project. As project leader for newly proposed "Cyprus, Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean", I develop digital historical and cultural content for the sites. Professor Sahar Amer's work on the transmission of culture and texts around the Mediterranean (Ésope au féminin) will serve as a model for tracing the movement of texts, objects, and ideas through Cyprus. I will create 3D immersive environments using the Unity3D game engine that allow visitors to virtually travel around the globe alongside medieval voyagers.

Proposed research
The newest portal that I am developing for the Global Middle Ages website is Cyprus, Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean. With its strategic location in the Mediterranean, Cyprus served as a crossroads between east and west in the Middle Ages. Crusaders, pilgrims, soldiers, and merchants from the Far East, Europe, Muslim states, and Byzantium mingled on the island before heading in disparate directions, leaving behind a legacy that augmented an already rich cultural layering of Phoenician, Ancient Greek, and later Roman civilizations. The Global Middle Ages Project aggregates artifacts and experiences that help researchers and students better understand the Middle Ages as a multicultural, multilingual, and global space. Cyprus, Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean will include teaching and research resources, 3D simulations, images and archeological data about sites and artifacts found on Cyprus. The data and tools will reside at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois where supercomputers will allow for the comparison and manipulation of large amounts of data that will provide for new insights into already precious data. We are proposing a partnership between the Global Middle Ages Project, Vanderbilt University, the University of Sydney, the Cyprus Institute for Cultural Heritage, the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) and the Extreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment (XSEDE) to develop Cyprus, Crossroads of the Mediterranean. The Cyprus Institute for Cultural Heritage, NCSA and XSEDE have already indicated their interest in partnering with us.

Professor Sahar Amer's expertise in medieval Islam is vital to the development of this project. Amer's work on the transmission of culture and texts around the Mediterranean (Ésope au féminin) will serve as a model for tracing the movement of texts, objects, and ideas through Cyprus. The further work she has done specifically on exchanges of cultural
cues between Islam and Christian Europe in Crossing Borders is precisely the sort of analysis that would yield fascinating insights in the Cyprus region.

At the University of Sydney, a global middle ages research group with a variety of disciplines (history, classical and medieval China, political science, literature and culture of Europe, Islam and Asia) has already been established. In addition to my own work at Vanderbilt University, I would like to connect the research of several other scholars at the University of Sydney (Sahar Amer, Islam; Clare Monagle, 12th century monasticism; Louise D'Arcens and Helen Young, medievalism; Helene Sirantoinne, medieval Spain; Esther Klein, ancient China) and scholars at Vanderbilt University (myself, medieval France and the Crusades; Tracy Miller, medieval Chinese architecture; Peter Lorge, medieval Chinese trade and warfare; William Caferro, history of medieval Italy; Elsa Filosa, literature of the medieval Mediterranean) to create a long-term collaboration between research groups at the two institutions.

During the fellowship period, I propose running a master class on digital humanities for global medieval scholars and post-graduate students at the University of Sydney and surrounding universities. I have experience running such a workshop--this summer I received a grant from my university to develop a training program for undergraduate and graduate students in the humanities that gives them the technological tools to work on the 3D immersive environments that are the cornerstone of the Global Middle Ages project. This training has proved to be hugely successful, as students are learning tools they can take with them in their own research at the same time that they contribute to the project. Professor Amer and I would like to explore ways that early career researchers and post-graduate students at the University of Sydney could be trained to use these tools, and we envisage continuing our work together after the fellowship period via Skype.

One of the goals of a global approach to the middle ages is to include the perspectives of multiple disciplines and scholars working on what constituted the "medieval" period in their geographical area of expertise. Professor Amer and I would like to set up a virtual seminar with participation of multiple researchers from around the world. This seminar could have a physical presence in Sydney and Nashville, but it would also include area experts from all over the world giving lectures and leading discussions via Skype or other virtual classroom software. Vanderbilt University has a strong program in Digital Learning and is seeking collaborations for global online courses. Developing such a seminar is a complicated undertaking, and Professor Amer and I would spend part of my time in Sydney working out the details.

**Benefits to University of Sydney**

The fellowship period would have lasting benefits to both my own work and that of the global middle ages research group at the University of Sydney. By transferring skills and expertise in digital humanities to early career researchers and post-graduate students at the University of Sydney, we will further their career possibilities while creating a cohort of scholars prepared to contribute to a variety of digital projects including our own. Creating a lasting collaboration between scholars in Nashville, TN and Sydney will open both groups of
researchers to the work being done on opposite sides of the globe, furthering our goals of seeing the middle ages as a global rather than national field of study. Exploring this interconnectivity will be particularly helpful in stimulating new discoveries, since the notion of national boundaries that pervades modern academic departments did not exist in the period we are examining.

In terms of publications, Professor Amer and I are planning an edited volume of essays on Cyprus, *Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean* that would make public the work and relationships that this collaboration will foster. We will also propose a series of sessions at major international medieval conferences, including the annual meeting of the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, England; the Medieval Academy of America; and the Australia and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies (ANZAMEMS).

Below is a brief bibliography of resources pertinent to this fellowship period: