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THE MEDIEVAL PRESENCE IN MODERNIST LITERATURE

Jonathan Ulliot's *The Medieval Presence in Modernist Literature* rethinks the influence that early medieval studies and Grail narratives had on modernist literature. Through examining several canonical works, from Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* to Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*, Ulliot argues that these texts serve as a continuation of the Grail legend inspired by medieval scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than adapt the story of the Grail, modernist writers intentionally fail to make the Grail myth cohere, thus critiquing the way a literary work establishes its authority by alluding to previous traditions. The quest to fail is a modernist ethics often misconceived as a pessimistic response to the collapse of traditional humanism. The writings of James, Eliot, Kafka, Céline, and Beckett posit that the possibility of redemption presents itself only when hope has finally been abandoned.

JONATHAN ULLIOT is a lecturer in Humanities at the University of Chicago. His articles have appeared in journals such as *Modern Philology*, *Comparative Literature*, and *German Quarterly*.

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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107131484

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First published 2016

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Ullyot, Jonathan.

The medieval presence in modernist literature : the quest to fail / Jonathan Ullyot,
University of Chicago.

New York : Cambridge University Press, 2015.

LCCN 2015021267 | ISBN 9781107131484 (hardback)

LCSH: European prose literature – 19th century – History and criticism. | European prose literature – 20th century – History and criticism. | Failure (Psychology) in literature. |

Civilization, Medieval – Influence. | Modernism (Literature) – Europe

LCC PN3352.F35 U55 2015 | DDC 809/.93358207–dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015021267>

ISBN 978-1-107-13148-4 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this study. Françoise Meltzer, Eric Santner, and David Wellbery helped to shape my argument through plenty of false starts. Others who offered substantial criticism include Chris Ackerley, Katarzyna Bartoszynska, Bill Brown, Maud Ellmann, Boris Maslov, Lisa Ruddick, James Rolleston, Anthony Uhlmann, and the participants of the Poetry and Poetics Workshop and the Modernisms Workshop at the University of Chicago. Countless others at the University of Chicago have inspired and encouraged me. An early version of Chapter 3 appeared in *German Quarterly* 83.4 (November 2010), and an early version of Chapter 5 appeared in *Modern Philology* 108.4 (May 2011). I gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint this material.