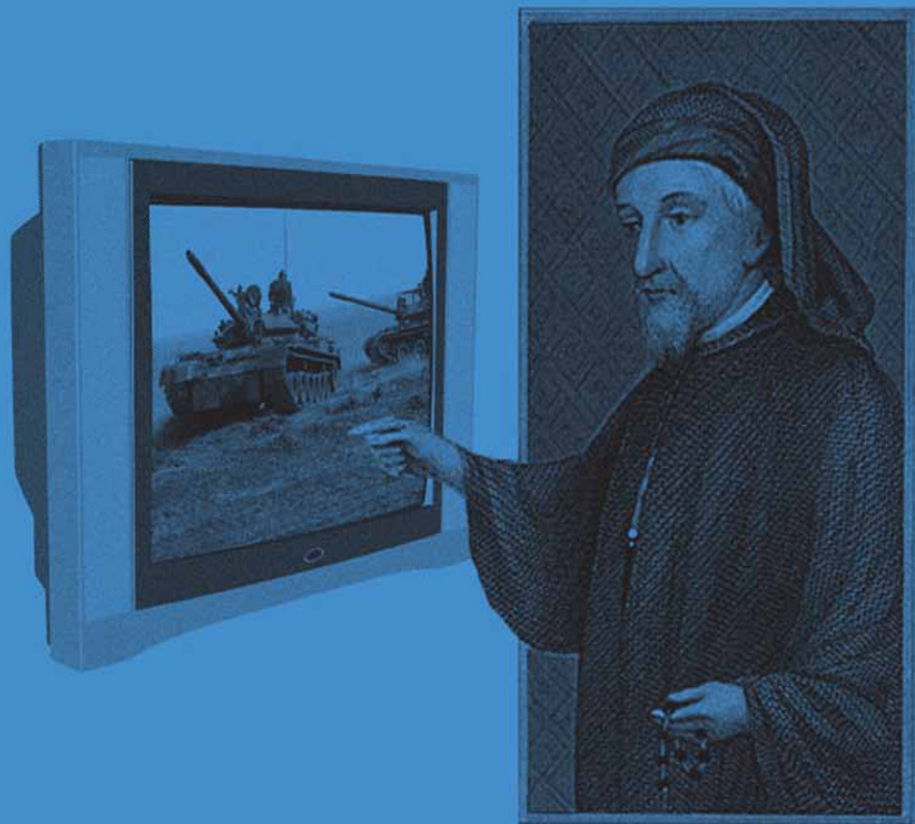


THE NEW MIDDLE AGES



CULTURAL
STUDIES
of the MODERN
MIDDLE AGES

*Edited by Eileen A. Joy, Myra J. Seaman,
Kimberly K. Bell, and Mary K. Ramsey*



THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

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CULTURAL STUDIES OF THE MODERN MIDDLE AGES

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FOREWORD

MEDIEVAL PRESENTISM BEFORE THE PRESENT

Nancy F. Partner

Even the contributors to this book will admit, despite the enthusiasm and conviction they bring to the presentist project of linking medieval culture to that newest of fields, cultural studies (a field expressly invented to deal with mass media and information technology), that the dank taint of “medievalness” will always cling to the Middle Ages. I always think it is best to admit it up front. We can’t rid ourselves of the name, at least so long as the Renaissance persists in being called the Renaissance, and the popular connotations of medieval will always stand for the opposite of modernity in ways both dismal and oddly alluring. These familiar binaries (medieval/renaissance, dark ages/reawakening, superstition/reason, corporate/individual) are far too well entrenched and too uninteresting to most people to be successfully destabilized now. We professionals in the medievalist line of work (and how odd that looks spelled out) routinely debunk the simplistic ideas of medievalness, wrench apart the old binaries—and they spring back together as soon as we turn our backs. But if postmodernism has taught us anything, it is that the meanings made by apparently obvious binary oppositions are anything but obvious, and once subjected to hard scrutiny are never again really simple in the old taken for granted way, even if we can’t suppress them entirely. And perhaps it is time to admit that we get a lot of intellectual traction out of the bad old misrepresentations of medievalness, so reliably there to debunk again and again in ever newer and more surprising ways. Presentism, forcefully aligning the newest of the now with a past so old that it qualifies as medieval, enjoys a feeling of daring and slight perversity whose freshness doesn’t stale.

That is a good thing but we are not the first to exploit its potential. Certainly, the “presentist project” carried out here is far removed from the wistful old classroom attempts to prove to rightfully skeptical students that the Middle Ages are “relevant” (no longer even a relevant word for academe) because proto-examples of modern institutions—parliament, universities, trial by jury, and so on—originated

in the twelfth or thirteenth century. That pedagogical tactic (if anyone still uses it) has a long pedigree and is the last enfeebled descendent of the first presentist project of medieval history, the great project of tracing English constitutional history back from the late nineteenth century to formative impulses in Anglo-Saxon political culture. This vast organizing theory originated in Oxford after Modern (i.e., post-Roman) History first entered the university curriculum with the creation of the Chichele Professorship of Modern History in 1861. We now dismiss this first hermeneutic of presentism as Whig History. The determinist teleology that eliminated from historical consideration every facet of medieval life that did not contribute to the development of parliament and its progressive metanarrative long ago played out their conviction and have come to stand for everything that self-aware scholarship avoids. But I think it is still important to remember that this was the true presentist project of the late nineteenth century, and that presentism, in some form, is a recurring and powerful tribute of recognition to something in medieval culture that speaks to us of ourselves through the thick and distracting layers of cultural difference and modes of life utterly unlike our own. Of course this seemed easier and more directly appreciated from the perspective of mid-Victorian England.

The greatest spokesman for that first claim to medieval continuities was William Stubbs, Chichele Professor in the 1860s, archival scholar and editor of medieval texts, and best known (if at all) as the author of the three-volume *Constitutional History of England* (1883). He expressed his presentist project in the introduction to that work as one of great severity, requiring self-discipline and an austere sacrifice on the part of historians of everything entertaining or emotionally gratifying in the study of history:

The history of institutions cannot be mastered—can scarcely be approached—without an effort. It affords little of the romantic incident or of the picturesque grouping which constitute the charm of History in general... But it has a deep value and an abiding interest to those who have courage to work upon it. It presents, in every branch, a regularly developed series of causes and consequences, and abounds in examples of that continuity of life, the realization of which is necessary to give the reader a personal hold on the past and a right judgment of the present. For the roots of the present lie deep in the past, and nothing in the past is dead to the man who would learn how the present comes to be what it is.¹

Confidently locating the origins of English parliamentary governance in the indigenous and spontaneous self-organization of the Germanic peoples who settled in Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries, which is exactly what Stubbs did, is not what this presentist project has in mind, to put it mildly. The determinist metanarrative of liberal progress was outmoded long before all metanarratives were deconstructed with linguistic turn tools. So bringing together medieval culture with TV and other visual media would seem, on the face of it, as far from the deep organizing principle of Stubbs's life work as one could go. But not so, I think. We don't have to see history as a *longue durée* of inevitable causes and consequences issuing in current political institutions to see, with Stubbs, that to get a fully imagined grip on the distant past, his "personal hold on the past" (and note the telling choice of "personal") does involve seeing "the roots of the present lie deep in the past" and that nothing of that past should remain "dead."

The pervasive self-consciousness of all work in the humanities alerts us to the fact that present things always set the agenda for the study of the past. Television in the globalized present is for us as compellingly iconic as parliamentary governance was for imperial Britain. But scholarly attention has moved across many disciplines from the social to the cultural realms. And the deep connections between medieval cultural artifacts and TV's complex reality are not so whimsical or overstrained as the idea may at first appear. All technologies serve basic and permanent human needs, and technologies of communication serve our needs for expression, connection, influence, and meaning. From this perspective, TV stands in an intelligible sequence with writing, visual iconography and public art, heraldry, printed books, and regularized postal systems. The startling juxtaposition of televised narrative with hand-copied and read aloud medieval narrative can direct our attention even more sharply to the permanent needs and capacities of the human mind to channel its desires by retaining and reassembling images and information. Technologies only serve to play out, but never resolve, the tension between reality and desire.

Note

1. William Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), pp. iii–iv.

INTRODUCTION

THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY: MEDIEVAL CULTURAL STUDIES AT THE END OF HISTORY

Eileen A. Joy and Myra J. Seaman

A historical work . . . that recognizes how the archaic, the past, the “primitive,” the medieval continues to inhabit the present as an inheritance of traumas unresolved and still demanding resolution . . . might also recognize the possibility that doing history can mean a commitment not just to excavating the past but to considering how the past inheres in the present in such a way as to demand that the present, and thus the future, be thought otherwise.

—Steven F. Kruger, “Medieval/Postmodern: HIV/AIDs
and the Temporality of Crisis”

. . . the study of culture without politics is an inane undertaking.

—Françoise Meltzer, “Future? What Future?”

The End of History

On 29 April 2005, *The New York Times* reported the following: “In a showdown that featured inside-the-Beltway lobbying and bare-knuckle boardroom negotiating, Donald J. Trump and President Bush effectively squared off yesterday in pursuit of the same parcel of real estate—a piece of the NBC-TV prime-time lineup. And it was the president who blinked first.”¹ The day before the White House had scheduled a press conference for 8:30 p.m. and NBC had requested it be moved to 8:00, so that it would not interfere with their highly rated reality TV program *The Apprentice*, scheduled to begin at 9:00. Other networks, such as Fox Broadcasting and CBS, had originally planned not to run the president’s press conference at all, because they did not want to preempt *their* highly popular shows—*The O.C.* and *Survivor*, respectively. In the end, the White House agreed to move the press conference to 8:00 and all three networks decided to give it live coverage. Yet despite the White House’s capitulation, NBC and CBS

stopped their coverage at exactly 9:00 p.m. *before* the president was finished with his parley with reporters, refusing to allow *The Apprentice* and *Survivor* to be preempted for even the one minute that was all that was actually left of the press conference. It was clear that President Bush himself was both aware of and nervous about when the TV networks might cut away from him, because midway through the hour he delayed questions from the print media, saying, "Let me finish with the TV people first."² And toward the end of the hour, he called for the final question from the press, saying, "I don't want to cut into some of these TV shows that are getting ready to air . . . for the sake of the economy."³

The entire affair raises the question of whether or not the press conference, a "real-time" (because it is aired live) historical event, had entered the realm of reality entertainment. That a presidential press conference might not have been considered generically different from other so-called reality TV programs, and, furthermore, was judged ahead of time to be less marketable than its prime-time fictional competitors, seems to have already been well understood. In a *Washington Post* article on the event the following day, media critic Lisa de Moraes referred to Bush's live appearance as a "non-news conference," and elsewhere in her article placed the word "news" within quotation marks to underscore her view that the press conference was not, in fact, news. While acknowledging that Bush "runs the country," de Moraes also wrote that "[f]ortunately . . . wiser men run the broadcast networks, men who know what it means to preempt 'Survivor,' 'C.S.I.' and 'The O.C.'"⁴ Although de Moraes does not, in fact, tell us what it means to preempt these shows (she assumes, obviously, we already get that), her comments display a real comfort with the idea that the press conference itself is no more real than what happens every week on that distant island in *Survivor*, because it is just as staged, yet infinitely less appealing.⁵

In this scenario, a presidential press conference is not only non-news, it is not even history-in-the-making, but just another media commodity to be slotted into the time period that best suits its market, or cancelled entirely for its perceived inability to produce an audience. The televised speech of an American president is simply understood—by network executives, reporters, cultural critics, and viewing audiences alike—as just another cultural production to be judged (or appreciated), not on the basis of its truth-value or lack thereof, or even on its relation to the pressing concerns of a general public, but on its ability or inability to attract an audience. And the question of its likelihood to do such has already been decided in advance, primarily because everyone has already agreed that whatever the president has to say isn't real, much less compelling, *even as fiction*. Has American politics finally entered into the realm (or is it a temporal zone?) of the post-everything post-*histoire*? Francis Fukuyama tells us that the twentieth century has witnessed "the end of history" precisely because of the supposed triumph and universalization of a process of modernization that produces Western liberal democracy as "the final form" of human government.⁶ If Fukuyama is correct, does this mean that at the moment Western liberalism triumphs—if not over the entire world's political affairs, then at least over the dominant *consciousness* percolating through a universal consumer culture that touches in some fashion all parts of the world—is that also when certain organs of that liberalism (the U.S. government, let's say) become secondary to the agents of free-market consumerism they have unleashed?

According to Fukuyama, the triumph of one particular ideology—Western liberalism—over all others also means “the end of ideology,” and, therefore, of the struggles (national and international) over competing political belief systems. Although Fukuyama (a neoliberal who once worked as an analyst at the RAND Corporation) clearly believes that political liberalism and a free-market economy represent the progressive and happily inevitable end-stage toward which history has always tended (in this respect, he is thoroughly Hegelian),⁷ he does not deny the ambivalence, and even despair, he sometimes feels toward what he views as the impersonality and vacuity that seems to inhere in liberal consumerist societies, where “economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems . . . and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands” has replaced the interior and cultural struggles over “big ideas” and the spiritual self, and he sees in the post-historical world “neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history.”⁸ The “showdown” between President Bush and the TV networks would seem to mark a certain post-historical moment when a free-market consumerism *has* triumphed, and everything has flattened into what we would call the *real estate* of culture. It is as if Derrida’s message were, finally, not only for the grammarians or the literary critics: everything really *is* text, and the problem, as Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt write, is that, “[i]f an entire culture is regarded as text, then everything is at least potentially in play both at the level of representation and at the level of event. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a clear, unambiguous boundary between what is representation and what is event,” and “if all the textual traces of an era ‘count’ as both representation and event . . . then it is increasingly difficult to invoke ‘history’ as a censor.”⁹

How to account for our peculiar moment in history when there seems to be no end to the number of very real historical and political traumas of the most highly shocking nature, from the events of 9/11 to the war in Iraq with its suicide bombings to the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib to the genocide in Sudan and beyond, while at the same time, there has never been such a proliferation of fictionalized “reality” entertainments? These very real historical traumas are presented to us in every narrative form imaginable, from live multimedia coverage to journalistic print accounts to testimonial transcripts to memoirs to photographs to on-line streaming video to radio documentaries to fictionalized movies; nevertheless, more Americans are drawn to watching the pseudo-reality of TV programs such as *Fear Factor* and *Survivor* than they are to, say, downloading the thousands of pages of transcripts of the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” hearings from post-apartheid South Africa. And even when some of us *do* find ourselves drawn to, for example, the on-line video of the beheading in Karachi, Pakistan, on 31 January 2002, of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, how do we watch this real act of terror without letting it slip in our minds into some kind of recursive, spectral performance that we are already intimately familiar with through horror films and our own nightmares?¹⁰ When we look at the digital photographs of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib prison, how do we separate in our minds the real event being photographed from the sadomasochistic fantasies and stock pornographic images that inspired their staging? For the photographs were, after all, staged, and arrived to us belatedly, not as documentary evidence of torture and abuse, but as the theater of that abuse and the dark psychology underlying it.

The public outrage over the incidents at Abu Ghraib—what little outrage there was—may have had less to do with what actually went on within the prison's walls and more to do with the perceived tastelessness or obscenity of the perpetrators turning it into entertainment, even pornography. As Susan Sontag wrote about the photographs, there was a “displacement of the reality onto the photographs themselves. The administration's initial response was to say that the president was shocked and disgusted by the photographs—as if the fault or horror lay in the images, not in what they depict.”¹¹ It would appear that the perpetrators themselves unwittingly touched upon something else for which they did not require the insight of cultural critique: the life not mediated by the images of the semblance of itself is not worth living, or, is not yet *real*. Or, as Sontag wrote, “to live is also to pose. To act is to share in the community of actions recorded as images. The expression of satisfaction at the acts of torture being inflicted on helpless, trussed, naked victims is only part of the story. There is the deep satisfaction of being photographed, to which one is now more inclined to respond not with a stiff, direct gaze (as in former times) but with glee. The events are in part designed to be photographed. The grin is a grin for the camera. There would be something missing if, after stacking the naked men, you couldn't take a picture of them.”¹² This state of affairs may have something to do with what Guy Debord noted in *The Society of the Spectacle*: all that “once was directly lived has become mere representation,”¹³ which also calls to mind Daniel Boorstin's famous commentary: that Americans live “in a world where fantasy is more real than reality, where the image has more dignity than its original. We hardly dare face our bewilderment, because our ambiguous experience is so pleasantly iridescent, and the solace of belief in contrived reality is so thoroughly real.”¹⁴ But how to understand this state of affairs (if, indeed, this *is* our state of affairs) alongside the contemporary “passion for the Real,” whether in the form of shock memoir, “end of the world” disaster movies, confessional talk shows, or reality TV? At what point did reality become a culture industry unto itself, and for what reasons? And what happens to Debord's idea that “[c]ulture is the meaning of an insufficiently meaningful world”¹⁵ in such a scenario?

In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* Slavoj Žižek discusses many different instances throughout the twentieth century, in both political and cultural life, of what he terms a “passion for the Real”—a type of human desire for touching reality through its semblances that Žižek argues creates a “fundamental paradox” culminating “in its apparent opposite, in a *theatrical spectacle*.”¹⁶ Žižek traces the manifestations of this passion through a broad range of “reality simulations” from Stalin's “show trials” to Hollywood disaster movies and beyond. According to Žižek, after we have spent a certain amount of time chasing after the virtual experience of the Real—whether through digitalized special effects or pornography or reality TV or anything else—“at the end of this process of virtualization... we begin to experience ‘real reality’ itself as a virtual entity.”¹⁷ Moreover, “[f]or the great majority of the public, the WTC [World Trade Center] explosions were events on the TV screen, and when we watched the oft-repeated shot of frightened people running towards the camera ahead of a giant cloud of dust from the collapsing tower, was not the framing shot itself reminiscent of spectacular shots in catastrophe movies, a special effect which outdid all others, since—as Jeremy Bentham knew—reality is the best appearance of itself?”¹⁸ Ultimately, in Žižek's

mind, "it is not only that Hollywood stages a semblance of real life deprived of the weight and inertia of materiality—in late-capitalist consumerist society, 'real social life' itself somehow acquires the features of a staged fake, with our neighbors behaving in 'real' life like stage actors and extras" and "the ultimate truth of the capitalist utilitarian despiritualized universe is the dematerialization of 'real life' itself, its reversal into a spectral show."¹⁹ And the dilemma we face in this situation (if, indeed, this *is* our situation) is not the difficulty of separating "fact" from "fiction" or the "real" from the "unreal," but in discerning "the part of fiction in 'real' reality" and "in what we experience in fiction, the hard kernel of the Real that we are able to sustain only if we fictionalize it."²⁰

The essays collected in this volume are concerned with how we might begin to trace and possibly unravel some of the intersecting and tangled relations between politics and culture, between reality and fiction, and between the supposed beginnings and endings of history, especially in relation to issues of identity and self-formation, morality, statecraft, justice, historiography, and the de-materialization of "real life." We are interested, moreover, in asking: if we are in the midst of a kind of crisis of post-*histoire*, how to historicize such a moment? At the end of history, does history reappear, and how? And how might medieval studies be ideally situated to write a new critique of contemporary life, one with an avowed commitment to the ethical well-being of our global polis, and that would also, in the words of Glenn Burger and Steven Kruger, bring "the medieval into proximity with the postmodern," while also "disturb[ing] traditional historical understandings of the Middle Ages as either a time of 'quiet hierarchies' or of squalid, antimodern disorder?"²¹ This would be a "queer history" that would "enable us to think history, and hence our own contemporary moment, otherwise," and it would call into question the ways in which "the postmodern has often been too easily proposed as a radical movement beyond a history thought somehow to have come to an end."²² The history of modernity, for the most part, *has* been written by postmodern theorists who often use the Middle Ages as the stand-in for everything that was once whole (when a past that possesses totality is crucial to the narrative), or crudely barbaric (when a past still in need of progress has to be posited).²³

In a talk he gave in 1995 at a conference at Georgetown University, "Cultural Frictions: Medieval Cultural Studies in Post-Modern Contexts," Paul Strohm asserted that "postmodernism is preoccupied with history, endlessly obsessed with history, and with the nature of the claims the past exerts upon us; it might almost be called a way of thinking about history and representation, provoked and endlessly refreshed by its refusal to allow final understanding." Moreover, "Postmodern theory has always needed us—that is, needed the past—in the sense that it has never not had designs upon us." Strohm further noted the way postmodernism fundamentally restores "the variegation, the fully contradictory variety of the historical surface"—which it does, however, by insisting on a "medieval organicism which secretly nourishes the illicit relation between most postmodern culture analysis and the idea of the social 'totality or whole.'"²⁴ Strohm urged medievalists to give back to the postmodernists "their honesty . . . by refusing to allow them to employ the Middle Ages as a kind of Jurassic Park where they stow an ideal of totality which they disavow for their own periods but still need, as an absent guarantor of the homologizing critical procedures they want to employ."²⁵ Because they know something about the complex heterogeneities of the Middle

Ages, and because they bear certain anxious concerns about current affairs, the authors of this volume of essays have some hope for the formulation and practice of a medieval cultural studies where the Middle Ages can disturb and disrupt the present's sense of itself as wholly modern and "new," and where Fukuyama's age of post-*histoire* will not become the site of the "perpetual caretaking of the [static] museum of human history," but instead will be the place of history's irruption as the still-to-come enclosed in the what-has-not-yet-been-thought about the past *and* the present.

The Semi-Stillness of Historical Time

It is the aim of our collection to bring together in medieval studies two important streams of contemporary humanities scholarship—cultural studies and presentism—within the context of the historical view that the *Annales* School historians termed *la longue durée* (the long wave, or the longest duration of historical time), in order to demonstrate that "[e]ach 'current event' brings together movements of different origins, of a different rhythm—today's time dates from yesterday, the day before yesterday, and all former times."²⁶ Their interest in history lay in its claims upon the present and in the present's need for it, a notion that has some resonance with Walter Benjamin's idea that to "articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize 'the way it really was'.... It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."²⁷ A hallmark of these historians' work was the search for "conjunctures"—trends (intellectual, economic, social, psychic, cultural, etc.) that would illustrate connections between diverse yet simultaneous phenomena over time. Fernand Braudel contributed the idea that historical time moves at different speeds, and he conceived of history as moving between two poles—that of "the instant" and of the *longue durée*. Braudel wanted to examine what he called the structures underlying all of history that exist as constructed realities that "time uses and abuses over time": "Some structures, because of their long life, become stable elements for an infinite number of generations: they get in the way of history, hinder its flow, and in hindering shape it. Others wear themselves out more quickly. But all of them provide both support and hindrance. As hindrances they stand as limits ('envelopes,' in the mathematical sense) beyond which man and his experiences cannot go."²⁸ Braudel urged his fellow historians to get used to the "slower tempo" and "semi-stillness" of the *longue durée*, to free themselves "from the demanding time scheme of history, to get out of it and return later with a fresh view, burdened with other anxieties and other questions."²⁹

Similar to Braudel's thought, Edward Said has argued that texts are significant forms in which "worldliness, circumstantiality, the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are... part of its capacity for conveying and producing meaning," and, further, that the work of cultural criticism itself bears a special responsibility because it embodies "in writing those processes and actual conditions in the *present* by means of which art and writing bear significance."³⁰ It is the contention of the authors of this volume that when certain medieval and contemporary cultural texts, such as Robert Mannyng's fourteenth-century penitential manual *Handlyng Synne* and the reality TV show *Survivor* (Cynthia Ho and James Driggers), or Chaucer's "Tale of Sir Thopas" and

Spike TV's *Joe Schmo Show* (Kimberly Bell), are placed alongside each other, they reveal mentalities and social conditions that persist over long durations of time as well as certain sensuous particularities and historical contingencies unique to their respective times of production and reception. We believe, moreover, that by spending some time delineating the persistence (or reappearance) of certain mentalities and social conditions *over time*, we can begin to recover (and even, repair) what Said describes as the "human cost" implicit in texts that are always, at the level of their *textuality*, "a system of forces institutionalized by the reigning culture."³¹ Many of the essays in this volume, such as Daniel Kline's study of the aporia of legitimacy at the centers of the Bush and Lancastrian regimes, or Steve Guthrie's account of medieval and more modern legal justifications for torture, work to demonstrate that when we return to the past with questions framed by the present, the present can be *rethought*—critically, ethically, and politically—in such a way that the future opens differently as well. For that reason, we have to admit that the essays in this volume are more concerned to elucidate and even intervene, intellectually, into present problems—social and political—than they are to illuminate the past. Differing slightly from the aims of the editors and authors of *Queering the Middle Ages*, who sought to "preposterously" rethink the Middle Ages "as the *effect* of a certain self-construction of the modern," and, by "queering" certain "stabilized ideas" of the Middle Ages, "to see the Middle Ages . . . in radically different, off-center, and revealing ways,"³² the editors and authors of this volume are more interested in rethinking, from the long perspective of a postmodern medieval studies, the radically different and preposterous present.

This brings us to our affinities with presentism, a critical strategy most often associated, in literary studies at least, with the Shakespeare scholar Terence Hawkes, who has argued that, yes, "we should read Shakespeare historically. But given that history results from a never-ending dialogue between past and present, how can we decide whose historical circumstances will have priority in that process, Shakespeare's, or our own?"³³ As opposed to Stephen Greenblatt, who is famous for having begun one of his books with the line, "I began with the desire to speak with the dead," Hawkes desires a criticism that will aim "to talk with the living."³⁴ Presentism is a critical project that "scrupulously seeks out salient aspects of the present as a crucial trigger for its investigations" of the past, and it is obviously political for Hawkes, who believes strongly that one of modernity's imperatives is a criticism that will undertake "a kind of principled and self-inventing betrayal of . . . [scholarly] tradition," and instead of merely prosecuting "facts," will actually execute "a material intervention into history" itself.³⁵ Hawkes asks us to consider that "none of us can step beyond time. It can't be drained out of our experience. As a result the critic's own 'situatedness' does not—cannot—contaminate the past. In effect, it constitutes the only means by which it's possible to see the past and perhaps comprehend it." Further, "[t]o reduce history to a series of isolateable, untheorized 'facts,' or neutrally analyzable 'texts,' is in any case unproductive. Facts do not speak for themselves. Nor do texts. . . . unless and until they are inserted into and perceived as part of specific discourses which impose their own shaping requirements and agendas. We choose the facts. We choose the texts. We do the inserting. We do the perceiving. Facts and texts, that is to say, don't simply speak. *We* speak, *we* mean, by them."³⁶

Ultimately, presentism, like Said's worldly criticism, desires to see what an older text might say and do in the here and now *against* the idea that it can only speak in the terms of the world to which it more pointedly refers. One result of this approach is the reversal of what Hawkes calls "apparently immutable conceptual hierarchies," such as primary/secondary and past/present, as well as the calling into question of certain underlying assumptions about the relationships between those concepts. The idea is not to distort our understanding of the past *as it really was* by viewing it through overly contemporary sensibilities, but rather to bring the past and present into creative tension with each other in order to reveal what James Earl has called "the residues of history stored in the metaphors of cultural life."³⁷ Often, this will involve making what may seem at first to be tenuous (or outright bogus) connections between apparently incongruous items, such as between a medieval dream vision and PBS's historical reality TV program *Manor House* (Betsy McCormick), or between a suicide bomber in contemporary Russia and Grendel in *Beowulf* (Eileen Joy). It would be fruitless to argue that the connections between past and present texts crafted in this volume are *not* tenuous, or even arbitrary in certain respects, but they are also attempts to delineate what Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has called the "traumas, exclusions, [and] violences enacted centuries ago" that "might still linger in contemporary identity formations," and to also explore a past that "could be multiple and valuable enough to contain (and be contained within) alternative presents and futures."³⁸ As Cohen writes in his afterword to our volume, in our "insistence upon the intimacy of the medieval within the modern and the modern within the medieval," our essays "collectively argue for a theory of intertemporality, of an interpenetration of remote times and histories," that, again, helps us to *think history otherwise*, as Nancy Partner does when she locates the origins of the realist novel, not in the philosophical epistemologies of the Enlightenment, where it is usually located, but in the "incorporated fictions" of medieval historiography, which also "reappear" in the simulated "reenactments" of the evening news.

Examples of critical work in medieval studies that read past historical texts and mentalities through the trigger of "salient aspects of the present" are rare in our field, although the list of published titles *is* growing.³⁹ Nevertheless, presentism is often considered a dirty word in medieval studies, where many believe that trying to understand the past on its own historical ground is the only authentic work that can be done. There is much contention in our field over how the kind of present-minded historical scholarship, first formulated by the *Annales* historians and later developing into area studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies, might best be developed in medieval studies, and along what lines.⁴⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum provides one tentative answer with which the editors of this volume would concur, when she writes that "the past is seldom usefully examined by assuming that its specific questions or their settings are the same as those of the present. What may, however, be the same is the way in which a question, understood in its context, struggles with a perduring issue such as, for example, group affiliation."⁴¹ Jeffrey Cohen's *oeuvre* also provides other tentative answers, and it is precisely because so much of his work has been devoted to the idea of the Middle Ages as both "alluringly strange" and "discomfortingly familiar" to modernity that we asked him to write the afterword to this book. In his introduction to the edited volume *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, Cohen argues

that medieval studies “must stress not difference (the past as past) or sameness (the past as present) but temporal interlacement, the impossibility of choosing alterity or continuity (the past that opens up the present to possible futures).”⁴² While Cohen has insistently asked medievalists to consider the place of the modern in the medieval and the medieval in the modern—their “temporal interlacement,” or “temporal interplacement,” as he puts it in his afterword here—he also questions contemporary cultural studies’ marking off of the past as irrelevant to its concerns.⁴³ And this brings us, finally, to the question of what we mean when we say that our work in this volume is “medieval cultural studies.”

The Question of “Being-Together”

One of the chief objectives of this volume is to demonstrate the value of medievalists doing cultural studies. But what do we mean when we say “cultural studies”? On one level it simply entails, in this volume at least, studying artifacts of contemporary popular and political culture—whether those artifacts be reality TV programs, films, photographs, White House propaganda, legal memos, or the reports of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—and bringing to the analysis of those artifacts the longest historical perspective possible. It also entails something Richard Johnson discusses in his much-cited essay “What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?,” where he wrote that the object of cultural studies is not the text itself (whether that text be a book or a television program), but the “*social life of subjective forms* at each moment of their circulation in the text.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, we understand that “cultural studies” is ultimately a much-vexed phrase, as well as a set of often disparate intellectual practices and fields that have developed over time, and there are many debates over what, exactly, cultural studies is. In its first incarnation, in Britain in the 1950s, according to the cultural theorist Simon During, it had two characteristic features: “It concentrated on ‘subjectivity,’ which means that it studied culture in relation to individual lives, breaking with social scientific positivism or ‘objectivism,’” and it was “an engaged form of analysis” that “worked in the interests of those who have the least resources. In this it differed not only from the (apparently) objective social sciences but from the older forms of cultural criticism, especially literary criticism, which considered political questions as being of peripheral relevance to the appreciation of culture.”⁴⁵ Early cultural studies in Britain was very much rooted in local and communal forms of working-class life, and when that began to fragment, especially in the 1970s, theorists began to see culture as a form of hegemony, and it was therefore “thought about less as an expression of local communal lives and more as an apparatus within a large system of domination, [and] cultural studies offered critiques of culture’s hegemonic effects.”⁴⁶ The dominant theorists in this period were Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault, whose work often concentrated on individuals living in settings constituted and ordered by various institutions in symbolic and hierarchical ways. More recently, cultural studies has become a site for the study of marginal and minority discourses, especially those outside the West or those that are migrant or diasporic within the West, and there has even been, in some quarters, a “celebration of commercial culture.”⁴⁷ Ultimately, according to During, “cultural studies is a discipline continuously shifting its interests and methods because it is in constant and engaged

interaction with its larger historical context and because it cannot be complacent about its authority.”⁴⁸

As to the future direction of cultural studies, During looks forward to an “engaged cultural studies” that will examine “its temporal border: the separation of past from present (asking, what the role of history is in contemporary cultural studies).”⁴⁹ It is precisely to this question of history’s role in cultural studies, and to the temporal borders that supposedly mark off the field of inquiry in cultural studies from the past, that our book partly addresses itself. We are still left with the term, *engaged*, by which During means not just a cultural studies engaged with examining its own history, but also *politically engaged*. More specifically, During writes that engaged cultural studies is academic work “that aims to produce knowledge from perspectives lost to and in dominant public culture, and to listen to far-off and marginalized voices,” and which would also be “a way of shoring up differences and counter-hegemony inside the humanities in an epoch of global managerialisms.”⁵⁰ This question of the political nature of cultural studies, especially of a North American *yet also medieval and Anglophile* cultural studies, which this volume mainly expostulates, requires, we believe, some further elaboration here.

Our brief summary of During’s overview of the history of cultural studies attends mainly to how this history has unfolded in Britain. According to Jonathan Culler, in Britain, “the very fact of studying popular culture was an act of [political] resistance [against high culture], in a way that it isn’t in the United States, where national identity has often been defined *against* high culture.”⁵¹ Therefore, in the United States, “it is scarcely self-evident that shunning high culture to study popular culture is a politically radical or resistant gesture.”⁵² And since it is generally agreed upon that “the production of national subjects” is no longer the central aim of the university,

it is perfectly all right for academics in universities to analyze and to teach all sorts of cultural materials and practices. This is not necessarily subversive. It feeds right into the culture industry and even constitutes something like its exotic arm. The American press is amused by cultural studies and likes to run stories about academics writing about Madonna or cereal boxes. Cultural studies is a continuation of journalism, on the one hand and, on the other, a contribution to the general disdain for academics, who are thought to make a complicated fuss about things that really should simply be consumed.⁵³

Somewhat less damning, but still attuned to the dangers inherent in academic work done in North America under the rubric of “cultural studies,” are Paul Strohm’s remarks that, “[i]n exchange for the relative freedom gained by separating itself from the materialist premise [in favor of a focus on textuality] . . . North American cultural studies has dealt away its principal means of maintaining itself as a practice separate from the larger range of available poststructural theories and rationales against which it seeks to define itself.”⁵⁴ In Strohm’s mind, there is some danger in cultural studies aligning itself too closely with postmodernism since postmodernism’s power, as an explanatory critical model, is partly derived from its “status as the cultural aspect of a triumphalist, transnational, market-oriented, late capitalist hegemony.”⁵⁵ The dilemma, especially in medieval studies that also claim to be

“medieval cultural studies,” is in determining how to embrace the postmodern insight regarding the messy, heterogeneous, and multi-perspectivist nature of social experience “without ceding our right to an ethical self-positioning.” Although we can certainly decline the role of “authoritative observer” that postmodernism has so successfully dismantled, Strohm argues that “we need not remain bored, serene, or indifferent,” because “history (past and present) is full of people placed in circumstances that require care, full of people who *can’t not care*. Such historical actors can neither be everywhere nor be nowhere; they have no choice but to be somewhere.” Strohm suggests we position ourselves “provisionally, precariously, temporarily, maybe sometimes bemusedly—but always somewhere. And wherever this somewhere is, that it be an invested place, a place that knows things are at stake.”⁵⁶

We are aware of the fact that much cultural criticism that calls itself political (or “engaged”) is only tangentially so, and it will be clear from the subject matter of this book, which includes, for example, the highly charged subjects of suicide terrorism and the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, that we are very concerned to position ourselves in an ethico-critical place “that knows things are at stake.” But we are not willing, either, to simply claim our work is political because its subject matter is political or because we express politically invested viewpoints. We know we have to think more deeply about how it is, in writing this book, our work is *engaged*, and in what way?

In 2003 the editors of *Critical Inquiry* organized a symposium to address, among other matters, the future of literary criticism and theory as well as the question of whether or not contemporary critical thought has “backed off from its earlier sociopolitical engagements.”⁵⁷ W.J.T. Mitchell, one of the journal’s editors, asked: “What can criticism and theory do to counteract the forces of militarism, unilateralism, and the perpetual state of emergency that is now the explicit policy of the U.S. government? What good is intellectual work in the face of the deeply anti-intellectual ethos of American public life?”⁵⁸ Stanley Fish raised the troubling argument (or is it a fact?) that politics “does not need our *professional* help; texts do.”⁵⁹ Other participants, however, expressed a great deal of anxiety over the idea of a literary or cultural studies shorn of any kind of political *raison d’être*, and they also worried about a future where critics don’t pay enough attention to how culture (and cultural thought) *shape* that future. J. Hillis Miller worried especially over what the role of the university can possibly be now that “those in power no longer think universities—their students, faculty, and administrations—are worth bothering much about, so little social influence do they have.” In response to Fish’s charge that literary criticism can only ever be about texts, while Miller conceded that scholarly writing may have no actual influence in the political realm, he also stated that “it is difficult these days to just stand by doing nothing, to go on . . . teaching within the parameters of our disciplines, doing ‘what we do around here.’”⁶⁰ This sentiment was echoed by Françoise Meltzer who asked, “what it tells us about the humanities that they can seem like a luxury in the face of impending political catastrophe.”⁶¹

What the editors of this volume believe we can say about the role of cultural studies in relation to current affairs is that all times in history are, in one way or another, times of crisis and catastrophe, and as Danielle Allen argued at the symposium, criticism “has generally been an instrument for coming to understand

political orders and phenomenon and then for intervening in them.” More to the specific purposes of our collection, Allen further commented, “If one wishes to know how language is working and shaping our world, one needs to know not just how it plays, obscures, reveals, and subverts, but also where human social orders are explicitly (and not just implicitly) held together by words: the realms of law and punishment, of value and the division of labor (gender and sexuality come in here), of religion, of organized strife (from athletic events to war), of membership in imagined communities like ‘the people,’ and of generational transition.”⁶² Many of the essays in this book explicitly address overtly political subjects, such as the Bush administration’s policies on torture (Guthrie and Moore), the absence of legitimate authority in the Bush White House (Kline), and female Chechen suicide bombers (Joy), and other essays attend to the ways in which certain “real-life” fictions and social imaginaries have overdetermined our understanding of our history, our current moment, and ourselves (Partner, Bell, Weisl, Ho and Driggers, McCormick, and Seaman and Green). It may be naïve to say so, but we do believe our work here represents a collective intervention into histories, medieval and modern, in order to *expose time(s) differently*, and it is by *doing so together* that we locate the center of our political engagement. This is the engagement Bill Readings partly outlines in his book *The University in Ruins*, where he argues that, even though the university has lost its imprimatur as an institution that authorizes culture, or that serves as a model of the “ideal society,” it has become “one site among others where *the question of being-together is raised*, raised with an urgency that proceeds from the absence of the institutional forms (such as the nation-state), which have historically served to mask that question for the past three centuries or so.”⁶³ As medievalists who are, whether we like it or not, the inheritors of a humanist tradition, we bear a special responsibility to the idea that the life devoted to reading, reflection, and letters retains some power in the matter of how history “turns out.” In the setting of the university, however ruined, that has been given to us as a kind of gift, we might recall the words of the poet Czeslaw Milosz: “The fabric of language has a constant propensity to come off from reality, and our efforts to glue them together are in most cases futile—yet absolutely necessary.”⁶⁴



The first half of the book, “Part I: Medieval, Reality, Television,” comprises essays that explore connections between medieval texts and contemporary reality TV programs. In chapter 1, “Models of (Im)Perfection: Parodic Refunctioning in Spike TV’s *The Joe Schmo Show* and Geoffrey Chaucer’s ‘Tale of Sir Thopas,’” Kimberly Bell analyzes how a contest based reality TV series and a medieval pseudo-romance both offer, through parody, metafictional critiques of their respective genres and stereotypes of masculinity, while also demonstrating the power of fiction to instantiate social realities. Chapter 2, Angela Jane Weisl’s “‘She appears as brightly radiant as she once was foul’: Medieval Conversion Narratives and Contemporary Makeover Shows,” demonstrates how—often through rituals of public humiliation, pain, and self-abnegation—both medieval and more contemporary conversion narratives reinscribe social norms on the bodies and minds of individuals (typically women) who are seeking change. Analyzing

the process of individual transformation in medieval works such as the plays of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, the epic *Prise d'Orange*, and the Auchinlek *King of Tars*, and in reality makeover programs such as *What Not to Wear*, *Extreme Makeover*, and *The Swan*, Weisl examines how the process of conversion is ultimately “a means of controlling what appears dangerous or threatening to the social order,” and almost always benefits the dominant community more than it does the individual. For Weisl, the popularity of makeover shows suggests “a persistent fascination with conversion that reflects gaps and fissures in contemporary society, as medieval grace is replaced by normative standards of appearance.” In chapter 3, “Outwit, Outplay, Outlast: Moral Lessons from *Handlyng Synne* and *Survivor*,” Cynthia Ho and James Driggers show how Robert Mannyng’s early fourteenth-century medieval penitential manual and a highly popular reality competition series both utilize reality-fictions in order to catechize their audiences regarding supposed cultural or moral “truths.” Though *Handlyng Synne* and *Survivor* are radically different cultural productions with different intentions—the former is a Christian handbook for confession and the latter a corporate game show—Ho and Driggers delineate some of the ways in which both texts illustrate the perils of trying to reconcile economic gain with moral status, as well as individual desires with community mores. Whereas *Handlyng Synne* ultimately places the emphasis on community health and the “truth” of salvation over individual success, *Survivor* “enacts a version of capitalism obsessed with validating its own power in spite of the needs of any given individual, social community, or larger moral arbiter.” In chapter 4, “Back to the Future: Living the Liminal Life in the *Manor House* and the Medieval Dream,” Betsy McCormick compares the dream visions of Christine de Pisan and Chaucer (in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and *Legend of Good Women*, respectively) and the PBS historical reality show *Manor House* as examples of liminal game spaces within which individuals can perform alternate and experimental social roles. Although liminal game spaces offer the promise of radical experimentation with certain cultural realities supposedly left behind, the “individual performances within these reality experiments reveal the power of rigid cultural and social stereotypes to attract, to overwhelm, or even to subsume the individual.” But the liminal experience also allows us, finally, “to live in the real.”

Between Parts I and II of the book we have included a clasp, or hinge, titled “Entertaining Histories/Historical Entertainments”: chapter 5, “Medieval Histories and Modern Realism: Yet Another Origin of the Novel,” by Nancy Partner, and chapter 6, “Sacrificing Fiction and the Quest for the Real King Arthur,” by Myra Seaman and John Green. Partner’s essay is actually a reprint of an article that appeared in *Modern Language Notes* in 1999, but which has been so influential upon much of the work behind this volume that we felt we had to republish it here. Long before the editors and some of the authors convened at the 2004 meeting of the Southeastern Medieval Association in Charleston, South Carolina, to deliver papers on “remaking the Middle Ages on reality television,” Partner had already made the connection in her article, where she writes that an evening news “simulation” of a domestic violence incident reveals “the conventions of medieval history-writing reincarnated in electronic communications on the cusp of the twenty-first century . . . like a ghost in the machine.” According to Partner, “the imaginative gratifications involved in what we might call the fictions of the real, which were eventually banished from generic nonfiction were,

in various degrees, part of the medieval historian's obligation to his readers and to his own reputation. It is easy to forget this because the later crisp generic separation between fiction and history which marks modern literary production and reception, awarded the prize of reader satisfaction entirely to fiction." Partner's essay provides an overview of the truth-in-fiction techniques of medieval historiographers in order to investigate the questions: "what sort of linguistic thing is it that claims to be a true representation of human reality-in-time? And what does it mean that this truth-claiming literature, until very recently, was routinely inflated with counter-factual, anti-evidentiary, unverifiable depictions? Is history, *qua* history as cultural artifact, substantially changed by its incorporation of fiction?" Ultimately, these are significant questions about genre, "grounded in historical literary culture, with transhistorical epistemological implications." In their essay that follows Partner's, and to whose thought and scholarship on fiction and truth in historical narratives they admit a great debt, Seaman and Green analyze the visual texts of the 2004 film *King Arthur* and the History Channel's documentary *The Quest for King Arthur*, in order to document a lingering positivistic desire to authorize history by removing the fictitious and leaving only what is archaeologically verifiable. Despite this desire, an analysis of both texts reveals a dependence upon the very fictions that have been supposedly rejected by the filmmakers who continually assert that their productions reveal the "real man" behind the legend. In their accommodation of chronicle and romance, medieval historiographers displayed less anxiety over the use-value of historical fictions about Arthur, perhaps because they understood better than modern artists, or modern historians, that legendary stories are already closer to the "real" man than history, which comes later, ever can be.

The second half of the book, "Part II: Medieval, Reality, Politics," is composed of essays that address contemporary political crises from the perspective of medieval history, or literature, or both. Chapter 7, "The Crisis of Legitimation in Bush's America and Henry IV's England," by Daniel Kline, analyzes the "politics of an eternal present" that traverses the gap of authentic legitimacy that Kline asserts forms the blank center of both the Bush and Lancastrian regimes. Legitimation *follows*, and doesn't precede, the creation of fictive pasts that authorize present administrative rules, and history is thereby removed as a problem. Both the Bush White House and Henry IV's rule are actually postmodern in their reliance on performativity, Derrida's "logic of the supplement," blurring the distinctions between fact and fiction, and ethical relativism. But the Bush White House is also medieval, similar to Henry IV's administration, in its blending of theology with politics, its crusading mentality, use of prophecy, and demonization of political opponents. In chapter 8, "Torture, Inquisition, Medievalism, Reality, TV," Steve Guthrie examines the history of torture in classical law, the Inquisition, and Tudor England, in relation to the practice of torture as authorized by the infamous White House legal memorandums regarding the treatment of "enemy combatants," and he argues that these memos "justify practices consistent with late-medieval and early-modern definitions of torture in the prosecution of religious and political crimes" while also making "no reference to these precedents" and refusing "to identify the practices as torture." Ultimately, there is an important distinction that needs to be made between "judicial torture" and

a type of “village games” sadism—a difference that was firmly set in medieval law but “hedged to the vanishing point” in current American law and practice. Continuing in this vein is chapter 9, “Wolves, Outlaws, and Enemy Combatants,” where Michael Moore compares U.S. policies regarding the imprisonment and treatment of “enemy combatants” with medieval practices of banishment and outlawry. Whereas “Tocqueville once described the old Prussian State as a strange monster, having a modern head [*tête moderne*] sitting uneasily atop a gothic body [*corps gothique*],” in the period beginning in 2001, the United States has appeared to do the reverse, adopting “a number of pre-modern legal concepts and practices, among which are torture, clandestine prisons, *lettres de cachet*, and outlawry, thereby giving the impression that the American State, atop its vibrantly modern social and economic body, had placed a crude medieval head, *une tête gothique*.” Therefore, “[p]rimitive aspects of early medieval law (banishment and outlawry) have been revived, marking a retreat from the highest achievements of medieval law (due process and legal humanism).” In chapter 10, “Exteriority Is Not a Negation But a Marvel: Hospitality, Terrorism, Levinas, *Beowulf*,” Eileen Joy compares the situation of the female Chechen suicide terrorist in contemporary Russia and Grendel in the Old English poem *Beowulf* alongside Emmanuel Levinas’s thinking on hospitality, in order to examine the ways in which terroristic violence (whether the anthropophagy of a Grendel or the belted bomb of a suicide terrorist) simultaneously summons and accuses us as those who are irreplaceable. Joy acknowledges that the correlation between the suicide bombers and Grendel is an overly tenuous one, but she argues that, “while both the Chechen women and Grendel are viewed in their respective cultures as figures of exorbitant exteriority, nevertheless, they are mainly terrifying for the ways in which they bring to vivid life (and death) the obscene violence at the interior heart of states that mark the place of a supposedly more ethical community.”

In addition to the brief foreword by Nancy Partner, “Medieval Presentism before the Present,” that opens the collection and a brief afterword by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Intertemporality,” that closes it, we have also included an otherword by Michael Uebel, “Opening Time: Psychoanalysis and Medieval Culture.” Although this chapter may seem at first not to fit with the other chapters in the volume, it has been included precisely because it performs a function intimately related to our subject matter here (medievalists practicing an *engaged* cultural studies) but not articulated anywhere else in the volume: it formulates a theory of psychoanalytic medievalism that is particularly well suited to “advance the terms by which temporality can be understood as a vital (cross-) disciplinary concern.” Directly confronting the “tone of defeatism” and conservative rigidity in medieval studies’ general attitude toward cultural studies, Uebel argues that many medievalists “tend to indulge themselves in a knowledge of the past that they make little if any attempt to translate to the present, let alone the future. The vast majority of medievalist scholarship is tragically myopic, failing to see the deep and vital connections between past, present, and future *épistèmes*, actions, and affectivities.” In Uebel’s view, psychoanalysis, especially in its “grappling with the dialectical role of the future in the presently existing personality structure,” represents “a crucial way of avoiding both intellectual rigidity and political sterility.”

Notes

1. Jacques Steinberg, "How the President's News Conference Ended Up Live on Four Networks," *The New York Times*, 29 April 2005: A23.
2. "Press Conference of the President," 28 April 2005, Office of the Press Secretary, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/04/20050428-9.html>.
3. "Press Conference of the President."
4. Lisa de Moraes, "The President's Preemptive Strike," *The Washington Post*, 29 April 2005: C03.
5. Even earlier, in 2003, de Moraes apparently already took for granted that in a presidential press conference the line between reality and fiction was hopelessly blurred when she wrote, "Who says viewers have no appetite for scripted programming? A whopping 56 million of them watched President Bush's prime-time show last week [6 March 2003] in which the president exchanged glib, well-rehearsed lines with a select cast of press corps members"; quoted in Jack Shafer, "Straight from the Spleen: The *Washington Post's* Lisa de Moraes Gives the Entertainment-Information Industrial Complex Hell," *Slate*, 8 August 2003, <http://www.slate.com/id/2086810>.
6. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), which has been described by Louis Menand as "a meditation on world history—via the influential lectures of the French-Russian philosopher Alexandre Kojève, given in Paris in the nineteen-thirties—in the tradition of Hegel, Marx, and Weber": "Breaking Away: Francis Fukuyama and the Neoconservatives," *The New Yorker*, 27 March 2006: 84 [82–84]. It should be noted that Fukuyama sees this "triumph" of Western liberalism as having occurred mainly in the world of *ideas*, and, as such, has yet to conquer fully the *material* world. Indeed, Fukuyama readily admits that many parts of the world are still held in the grip of ideological, sectarian, religious, and other sorts of violent conflict, but he also maintains that, for the most part, all of the supposedly viable alternatives to economic and political liberalism that have advanced themselves at one point or another in the twentieth century (i.e., fascism, communism, absolutism, and socialism) have essentially exhausted themselves, and the tendrils of Western consumerist culture can be seen in the most unlikely places, such as China and Cuba. But it is worth reemphasizing, too, that Fukuyama has been distressed that many readers have interpreted his book as being about the triumph of a particularly *American* liberalism, when, in fact, he is making an argument about the progress of modernization in general. For another perspective on the supposed "end of history," see Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); for an overview of the various historiographical discourses of "the end of history," as well as a refutation of that discourse, see Lutz Niethammer, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?* trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1992).
7. It should be noted here that, more recently, Fukuyama has distanced (even removed) himself from the neoconservative circle in which he has played such an influential role, in part because of his disenchantment with the Bush administration's handling of the war in Iraq. On this point, see his book, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neo-Conservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
8. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," *The National Interest* (Summer 1989): 3–18. Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* (cited above) represents an expansion and refinement of his ideas about the end of history articulated in this essay, which received wide attention and was much debated when it first appeared.
9. Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, "Introduction," in Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University