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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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.

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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

- of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 15 and 16 [1–19]. Gallagher's and Greenblatt's commentary, in its original context, is addressed to the problem of the challenges posed to literary criticism in the wake of the insight, partly drawn from the Geertzian anthropology of the 1970s and partly from the contemporary "pantextualism" of deconstruction, that "all culture is text" (p. 14), but the challenges Gallagher and Greenblatt outline are equally applicable to the problem of how to analyze the intersections of politics and culture when "everything is culture" and "all culture is text."
10. This is apparently the trap Bernard-Henri Lévy fell into when he created his stream-of-consciousness narrative reconstruction of the last moments of Pearl's life in his book *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?* (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House, 2003), pp. 31–43.
 11. Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 May 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/23PRISONS.html>.
 12. Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others."
 13. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), p. 1.
 14. Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Vintage, 1961), p. 37.
 15. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 131.
 16. Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 9. Žižek borrows the term "passion for the Real," or "la passion du réel," from Alain Badiou, who identifies it as a "key feature" of the twentieth century; see Alain Badiou, *Le siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005).
 17. Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, p. 11.
 18. Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, p. 11.
 19. Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, pp. 13–14.
 20. Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, p. 19.
 21. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger, "Introduction," in *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. xiv and xvi [xi–xxiii].
 22. Burger and Kruger, "Introduction," in Burger and Kruger, *Queering the Middle Ages*, pp. xx and xiv. For representative examples of the practice of the queer history Burger and Kruger describe (in addition to the individual contributions to their volume), see Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), especially Chapter 3, "Margery Kempe Answers Back" (pp. 141–82); and Karma Lochrie, *Heterosyncracies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
 23. See Bruce Holsinger in his book *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), where he writes that "the critical discourse of postwar France be reconceived in part as a brilliantly defamiliarizing amalgamation of medievalisms" that "reaches across a millennium to embrace a distant epoch as a foundation for its own intellectual work while elaborating a diverse and often perplexing self-contradictory vision of the Middle Ages and their legacy to modern theoretical reflection" (p. 4). Ultimately, in Holsinger's view, the European Middle Ages and European medieval studies have had a "deep, sustaining, and constitutive role...in the last half-century's theorization of language, culture, and society" (p. 12).

24. On the contemporary turn to alterity, the marginal, the suppressed, and the grotesque in medieval studies, partly as a reaction to postmodernism's "organicist" conception of the Middle Ages, see Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 103 (1988): 677–704. It should be noted here that Freedman and Spiegel are somewhat concerned about this contemporary turn to Otherness in general, partly because they fear the idea that the Middle Ages can be represented as intelligible at all is being "undone": "The goal [in studies of the Middle Ages that emphasize the "pathogenesis" and suppressions of medieval culture]...is not so much an expansion, enrichment, or even complication of our understanding of medieval culture but rather its 'undoing.' In focusing on what is excluded from both medieval representations and our representations of the Middle Ages, representation itself is rendered a 'phantasm' and is undone" (701).
25. Paul Strohm, "Cultural Frictions: Conference Commentary," *Cultural Frictions: Medieval Cultural Studies in Postmodern Contexts Conference Proceedings* (1995), <http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/conf/cs95/papers/strohm.htm>. This commentary was later revised into the book chapter "Postmodernism and History," in Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 149–62. Unless otherwise noted, we are citing the original version.
26. Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et science sociale: La longue durée," *Annales ESC* 13 (1958): 725–53; reprinted, trans. Sarah Matthews, in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, ed. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, Postwar French Thought Series, Vol. 1 (New York: The New Press, 1995), p. 124 [115–45]. The *Annales* historians were less an official "school" than they were a loose affiliation of scholars with some shared aims who emerged in France in the late 1920s and were grouped around the journal titled *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, founded in 1929 by Lucien Febvre (1878–1956) and Marc Bloch (1886–1944). Their work was partly a reaction to and break with the positivist historical method inherited from Leopold von Ranke that focused primarily on short periods of history from a political-military perspective (with an emphasis on "great men" and the "significant event"). They developed instead a comparative, interdisciplinary, and sociological model of history that looks at the "conjunctures" between ephemeral structures, such as collective beliefs and mentalities, and "harder" structures, such as geography and architecture, that persist and also change over long periods of time. Historians influenced by this new model included Febvre and Bloch in the first generation, and later, Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Phillipe Aries, Michel de Certeau, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault. For important histories of the *Annales* movement, see François Dosse, *New History in France: The Triumph of the Annales*, trans. Peter V. Conroy, Jr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), and Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–89* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990).
27. Walter Benjamin, "Theses for a Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 255 [253–64].
28. Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociale: La longue durée," in Revel and Hunt, *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, p. 122.
29. Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociale: La longue durée," in Revel and Hunt, *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, p. 124.
30. Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 39 and 53.
31. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 53.

32. Burger and Kruger, "Introduction," in Burger and Kruger, *Queering the Middle Ages*, p. xiii.
33. Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 3.
34. Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present*, p. 4. See also Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
35. Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present*, pp. 22 and 20.
36. Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present*, p. 3.
37. James W. Earl, *Thinking about Beowulf* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 136.
38. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Midcolonial," in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 3 [1–17].
39. See, for example, Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism*; Burger and Kruger, "Introduction," in Burger and Kruger, *Queering the Middle Ages*; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Allen J. Frantzen, *Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) and *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Allen J. Frantzen and John D. Niles, eds., *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997); Bruce Holsinger, *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2007); Lochrie, *Heterosyncracies*; Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schulz, eds., *Constructing Medieval Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Claire Sponsler, *Ritual Imports: Performing Medieval Drama in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Form in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) and *Premodern Places: Calais to Surinam, Chaucer to Aphra Behn* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004); and Angela Jane Weisl, *The Persistence of Medievalism: Narrative Adventures in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
40. On these issues as well as on how the term "medieval" as a conceptual and historical category has been under-theorized within postcolonial studies, see Bruce Holsinger, "Medieval Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and the Genealogies of Critique," *Speculum* 77 (2002): 1195–227.
41. Caroline Walker Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995): 29 [1–33].
42. Cohen, "Midcolonial," in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, p. 5. For Cohen's further thinking on the issue of temporality and medieval studies, see also Chapter 1, "Time's Machines," in his book *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
43. See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Preface: In a Time of Monsters," in Cohen, *Monster Theory*, p. ix [vii–xiii].
44. Richard Johnson, "What Is Cultural Studies, Anyway?" *Social Text* 16 (1986–87): 62 [38–80].
45. Simon During, "Introduction," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1–2 [1–28].
46. During, "Introduction," p. 4.
47. During, "Introduction," p. 15.
48. During, "Introduction," p. 17.
49. During, "Introduction," p. 26.
50. During, "Introduction," pp. 25 and 28.

51. Jonathan Culler, "What Is Cultural Studies?" in *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, ed. Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 337 [335–47].
52. Culler, "What Is Cultural Studies?" p. 338.
53. Culler, "What Is Cultural Studies?" p. 345.
54. Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 150.
55. Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, p. 160.
56. Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, p. 161.
57. W.J.T. Mitchell, "Medium Theory: Preface to the 2003 *Critical Theory* Symposium," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 330 [324–35].
58. Mitchell, "Medium Theory," 327.
59. Stanley Fish, "Theory's Hope," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 378 [374–78].
60. J. Hillis Miller, "Moving *Critical Inquiry* On," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 417 [414–20].
61. Françoise Meltzer, "Future? What Future?" *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 468 [468–71].
62. Danielle Allen, "On the Sociological Imagination," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 340, 340–41 [340–41].
63. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 20.
64. Czeslaw Milosz, "Coming Unglued," in Czeslaw Milosz, *Road-Side Dog*, trans. Robert Haas (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), p. 164.

PART I

MEDIEVAL, REALITY, TELEVISION

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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 K. Bell

This essay argues that The Joe Schmo Show and Chaucer's "Tale of Sir Thopas" use metafictional parody to "refunction" generic forms and critique stereotypes of masculinity.

In August 2003, MTV Networks, a division of media giant Viacom, launched its newly formed network Spike TV. Touting itself as the "first network for men,"¹ Spike TV offers a line-up of shows, movies, and reality programs geared to male viewers, including *Star Trek*, *Most Extreme Challenge (MXC)*, *CSI*, and an extensive run of James Bond movies. It also offers a small selection of original programs that initially included Stan Lee's *Stripperella* cartoon (starring the voice of Pamela Anderson) and the *Ren and Stimpy Adult Party Cartoon*. Its most popular early, original program was a reality program called *The Joe Schmo Show*. Debuting on 2 September 2003, the show garnered immediate attention from the press and on-line blogs, largely because it billed itself as a *faux* reality program. In fact, *Joe Schmo* is a parody of contest-based reality shows, created to appeal specifically to a male audience. While the parody in *Joe Schmo* generates humor, it surpasses comedy for entertainment's sake to offer self-consciously, through metafiction, a critique of reality programs and their viewers. In blatantly exposing the mechanics of reality TV, the show draws attention to the fictionality inherent in all reality TV. *Joe Schmo*'s critical use of metafictional parody recalls Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century "Tale of Sir Thopas," a parodic rendering of Middle English romance. Like the creators of *Joe Schmo*, Chaucer self-consciously employs metafictional parody as a means to critique a popular genre, in this case Middle English romance, and the consumers of such texts. Setting the "interrogative agenda" of Chaucer's "Sir Thopas" in the context of a twenty-first-century reality show allows a dialectic to emerge between the

two parodies that not only bridges the hermeneutic gap separating present from past but also demonstrates, in a more immediate way, how parody transcends time and medium to “refunction” worn out aesthetic forms and critically assess particular historical moments.²

Parody in both *Joe Schmo* and “Sir Thopas” functions differently from how it is understood in its most popular sense. As is well known, parody borrows from and transforms generic conventions found in such diverse artistic media as music, architecture, cinema, literature, and TV programs, often for humorous, critical, or ironic purposes. Modern understanding of parody often associates it with other related but dissimilar forms, particularly satire and the burlesque. These forms, along with travesty, forgery, and plagiarism, tend to exhibit negative, even destructive tendencies in the ways they draw from and comment on other texts.³ The association of parody with these forms tends to cast it in a negative light: it is viewed as “derivative,” and, at worst, it is characterized as “trivial and parasitic.”⁴ Unfortunately, such reductive views of parody downplay or ignore parody’s potential as a viable art form, resulting in its relegation to the periphery of serious literary discussions.

Aristotle first used the term *parody* [παρωδία] in reference to the works of Hegemon (fl. fifth century BCE),⁵ in which people were portrayed as being *worse* [χείρους] than they really were. Parody in ancient Greece was also used in the adaptation of Homeric poetry into comedy, of which the *Batrachomyomachia*, or *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, is the only extant example, and in the Old Comedy of Aristophanes. Its etymological relationship with other nouns, including *parodos* [παρωδός] in reference to an ‘imitating singer’ and *parode* [παρωδή], a ‘song sung in imitation of another,’ led to later Greek and Roman associations of parody with a more general sense of comic imitation or quotation as well.⁶ In *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*, Margaret Rose explains that parody in the ancient world was generally “understood as being humorous in the sense of producing effects characteristic of the comic,” and she adds, “if aspects of ridicule or mockery were present these were additional to its other functions.”⁷ Taking into consideration the device’s etymological roots, history of usage, and applications in a variety of artistic media, Rose broadly defines parody as “the comic refunctioning of preformed linguistic or artistic material.”⁸ In this sense, *pre-formed* material describes “the way in which the materials targeted in a parody have been previously formed into a work or statement of some kind by another,” whereas *refunctioning* refers to “the new set of functions given to parodied material in the parody” that may “entail some criticism of the parodied work.”⁹ Rose’s definition does not apply to all parody, as Linda Hutcheon demonstrates in her study of twentieth-century parodic art forms for example, but it does describe the parody found in *Joe Schmo* and “Sir Thopas,” for each takes a humorous look at other genres to explore serious literary and social issues without resorting to the negativity associated with other forms.

Joe Schmo is a program that is at once a contest-based reality show and a critical look at reality TV. It achieves this dual perspective by presenting itself as a show-within-a-show. The outer show is *Joe Schmo* itself, a program that offers viewers a behind-the-scenes look at a fictional reality game show (the show-within-the-show) called *The Lap of Luxury*. *Joe Schmo* aims its critical lens at *The Lap of Luxury* by employing certain conventions of realism found in

the documentary genre, or *cinéma vérité*, including the authoritative voiceover narration, the use of real people, and the inclusion of interviews to imbue it with a sense of immediacy and authenticity. Such “formal markers” confirm for viewers that what they are witnessing “is a record of an ongoing, and at least partly media-independent, reality.”¹⁰ The producers sharply contrast this reality to that portrayed in the scripted game show. Like the documentary, *Joe Schmo* seeks to “inform viewers of occurrences within society by offering them a convincing and balanced account of events,”¹¹ but the actions it records are those that occur within the game rather than in society, resulting in what Barbara Creed calls the subversion of the “conventional ethnographic gaze.”¹² In her 2003 monograph *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality*, Creed explains how reality shows “[t]rain the camera on the desires, actions, relationships and lifestyles of a group of ordinary people in the style of an ethnographic or documentary film in order to let them ‘reveal’ themselves to the viewing audience in the style of postmodern ethnography.” She finds that “[t]his is perhaps the most original and refreshing feature of this form of reality TV; it subverts the conventional ethnographic gaze in order to present the dominant culture looking at itself ‘warts and all.’”¹³ *Joe Schmo* challenges the traditional use of the ethnographer’s look at society even further, for the events that unfold before the cameras are those of the parodic—and blatantly fictional—game show.

Whereas *Joe Schmo* draws from the documentary genre, its show-within-the-show, *The Lap of Luxury*, imitates the conventions of reality game shows. Like *Big Brother*, *The Bachelor*, its spin-off *The Bachelorette*, and *Joe Millionaire*, *The Lap of Luxury* is set up as a contest-based, one-hour weekly reality program in which multiple people, living in the same house and isolated from the outside world for a set number of days, compete against one another in a complex game.¹⁴ As in *Survivor*, contestants of *The Lap of Luxury* negotiate the dynamics of the game by engaging in competitions for prizes and forming alliances with other players as they attempt to win immunity from elimination in various games and try to avoid being voted off of the show by their peers in an eviction ceremony. The goal is to win a large sum of money by being named the one who best fulfilled the purpose of the game—to “outperform” the other players—by a jury comprising those members already ejected from the show.¹⁵ Contestants share sleeping quarters, meals, activities, and down time within the confines of the house and its surrounding area, all under the watchful eye of cameras as in *The Real World* and *Big Brother*. Every day, each member takes time away from the game and other contestants to respond to events of the previous days, assess other participants, and divulge hopes, fears, dreams, and game strategies in a daily interview, which resembles the confessional booths in *Big Brother* and *The Real World*. *The Lap of Luxury*’s imitation of these and other shows forms the structure of the parody.

With its imitation of the essential structure of reality programs, *Joe Schmo*’s *Lap of Luxury* creates an intertextual relationship between it and other reality programs, firmly situating itself within a recognizable genre. A genre is part of an understood system of communication among speakers (or, in this context, writers) who create works, and the receivers, including readers, listeners, and viewers who interpret them. By imitating features of a wide range of generically similar texts, *The Lap of Luxury* signals to its audience its generic affinities. Moreover, it

employs general rather than specific parody, thereby inviting audiences to view the entire tradition of contest-based reality shows through its own parodic lens. General parody, particularly of such a popular genre as reality TV, widens the audience base, so that both the casual and avid viewer of reality programs can recognize and participate in the interplay between the parody and the genre it targets.

Imitation in parody does not “stop at imitation alone”; rather, it copies certain aspects of its target tradition and transforms others.¹⁶ Though adhering to the fundamental structure of its target genre, *The Lap of Luxury* nonetheless sets itself apart from reality TV by inverting the essential premise of contest-based reality programs. Unlike the typical reality game show, where the display of people competing against one another for a prize drives the action, *The Lap of Luxury* is actually no contest at all. Instead, it is an elaborate set-up in which all but one of the contestants are actors working from a script. The exception is the unwitting star of the show, Matthew Kennedy Gould, a man from Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, who believes he is competing for \$100,000 against the other participants in an unscripted game show. The purpose of the show’s actors is to sustain the fiction of the game and exploit Matt’s ignorance of its premise until they reveal the hoax in the final episode. *The Lap of Luxury*, then, is not about winning anything; rather, in *Truman Show*-like fashion, Joe Schmo’s producers posit their reality game show as a social experiment. As a result, the show focuses on Matt’s ignorance of, conformity to, and deviance from its well-devised plan, the fictional world of the game. This reversal of the concept of contest-based reality TV, from game to experiment, sets viewers, cast, and crew in opposition to Matt, who is unknowingly cast not as a contestant but as a spectacle, an object for the rest of us to scrutinize, critique, and ultimately ridicule. The shift from game to experiment distances the *Lap of Luxury* from the very shows it imitates.

This distancing effect between the parody and the parodied reality TV tradition results in what Rose calls “comic incongruity.”¹⁷ Writers of parody can accomplish “comic incongruity” by altering the form, content, style, subject matter, and/or the meaning of the parodied work.¹⁸ *The Lap of Luxury* retains the essential form and structure of other reality game shows, while it transforms the content, subject, and meaning found in them. The dramatic irony inherent in Matt’s position vis-à-vis everyone else provides plenty of comedic opportunities at Matt’s expense as viewers witness him negotiating the intricacies of a game only he believes is real. At the same time, *The Lap of Luxury* creates its own “comic incongruity” by reworking recognizable elements found in other reality shows, including transforming *The Bachelor*’s framed pictures of its female participants into tacky contestant collectors’ plates and handcuffing two contestants for an afternoon reminiscent of the short-lived UPN reality dating game, *Chains of Love*. It also models its host after *Survivor*’s Jeff Probst, reworking Probst’s detached and objective persona into the “smarmy host” Ralph, who not only comments on the actions of the participants and judges competitions, but who also oversteps his bounds as the impartial observer when he becomes embroiled in a love triangle with two of the contestants.

Joe Schmo establishes “comic incongruity” between *The Lap of Luxury* and the parodied reality TV genre on a larger scale by humorously reconfiguring the content of the shows it imitates, especially *Survivor*. In each episode of Mark

Burnett's popular reality program, participants try to "outwit, outplay, and outlast" the others in two types of games that test their memory, strength, and endurance. Players first engage in a competition for rewards, items or prizes offered to winners usually intended to aid in their survival in the wilderness (fishing gear, blankets, food, and basic toiletries, for example) or to make their stay more psychologically and emotionally bearable (such as communication with loved ones and day trips to exotic locales). In each episode they also compete in a second game for immunity from elimination at the next tribal council as symbolized by an "immunity idol" (a statue in group or "tribal" challenges and a necklace in individual competitions). *The Lap of Luxury* contestants' goal to "outdo, outshine, outperform" the others recalls that of *Survivor*,¹⁹ and the *Lap of Luxury* has its own rewards and immunity challenges. In the parody, though, contestants vie for luxury goods and services in "pampering" challenges of strength and endurance that have little to do with overcoming nature's harsh elements and have everything to do with sex, beautiful women, and money. The competitions include swimsuit-clad competitors being handcuffed together, drizzled in honey, and rolled in money and an underwear exchange between the men and women; the immunity challenges test the fortitude of participants in their ability to lick chocolate off topless exotic dancers or in being able to splash water on t-shirt clad models in a swimming pool to reveal clues to a puzzle written on their bodies. As *Survivor* grants an immunity idol to those who win the competition, *The Lap of Luxury* gives out its own immunity idol, a garish lord of the manor "pimp robe."

One immunity challenge in particular makes obvious the comic disparity of content between *The Lap of Luxury* and its targeted genre. Modeled after *Survivor: Marquesas's* "Hands on a Hard Idol" challenge, in which the last three survivors, physically and mentally exhausted after a particularly rigorous trek to the challenge site, had to see who could outlast the others by balancing on two uneven stumps while leaning forward and keeping one hand on a large tribal idol,²⁰ *The Lap of Luxury's* "Hands on a High-Priced Hooker" challenge offers its own test of "mental and physical stamina" for participants, who try to "outdo" the others by keeping an assigned body part (hand, elbow, chin, groin, for example) on a topless adult film star the longest.²¹ In these and countless other instances, *Joe Schmo's* producers change elements found in target shows to emphasize the potential for the humorous in reality game shows or to draw attention to those things the stereotypical male viewer finds appealing—sex, money, and power—thereby boosting the show's ratings. Through the incongruities of content and meaning in *The Lap of Luxury's* parody of other reality shows, *Joe Schmo* makes viewers aware of the conventions of reality TV; that is, it makes us see how these types of shows work.

The self-conscious dynamics of this parody open it to metafictional dimensions. Metafiction deliberately manipulates generic conventions and literary strategies to foreground narrative structures, thereby drawing particular attention to the act of creating texts. Simply put, metafiction "is fiction about fiction."²² The show's key metafictional strategy of the Chinese box structure of a story-within-a-story is central to metafictional parody, for it systematically draws attention to the act of creating a fiction; in this case, both the inner and outer shows direct our attention to and comment on the creation of reality TV.²³ *Joe Schmo's* inner

show, *The Lap of Luxury*, utilizes metafiction in the construction of its characters. Like many reality shows, *Joe Schmo* opens with the names and headshots of each contestant, except that the names of the participants are fictional. Drawing from *Survivor*'s practice of referring to its contestants' occupations outside the game—Kimmy the bartender, Rob M. the construction worker, Big Tom the farmer, Jolanda the lawyer, for example—the cast members of *The Lap of Luxury* are tagged by a description of the role each is assigned to play in the game. They include Brian the buddy, Ashleigh the rich bitch, Dr. Pat the quack, Earl the grizzled veteran, Kip the gay guy, Hutch the asshole, Gina the schemer, Molly the virgin, and Ralph the smarmy host.²⁴ As expected, each behaves according to his or her scripted role: Molly (the virgin) is a fundamentalist Christian who cringes at sexual or scatological remarks made by the other participants; Dr. Pat (the quack), a childless marriage and family counselor who is thrice divorced, attempts to psychoanalyze the others with the aid of her anatomically correct therapy dolls; Kip, the flamboyant and effeminate gay guy who speaks with a Puerto Rican accent, is susceptible to histrionic outbursts; and Hutch (the asshole) seeks to unsettle members of the household by engaging in socially unacceptable behavior, such as picking his toes at the dinner table and claiming to have urinated in the spa. This cast of characters represents a cross-section of the types of people who participate in reality TV shows, while exaggerating the stereotypical characteristics associated with the virtuous, the gay, the ambitious, and the wealthy. As such, they become caricatures of reality TV participants.

The show's greatest stereotype is Matt himself, whom producers label in the opening credits as "Joe Schmo." Spotted by a casting director while playing basketball, Matt was selected by the show's producers because he was "a regular guy."²⁵ As Ralph Garman, the actor who plays the "smarmy host," explains in his post-production interview with Matt, "for weeks we searched the nation for a guy that would embody our vision of Joe Schmo."²⁶ Though the show never explicitly reveals what its idea of a "Joe Schmo" is, the producers obviously needed to cast someone who could appeal to their target audience, males between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Much of what contributes to the success of reality TV is the ability of viewers to relate to the participants, and as with reality game shows in general, *Joe Schmo* determined who would fit the bill. Not surprisingly, Matt exhibits characteristics many members of the target audience might relate to or at least understand. A moderately attractive, slightly overweight, apparently emotionally immature American male, Matt nonetheless has an honest disposition and self-deprecating sense of humor that immediately attracts viewers. He is in many ways just an average guy. At the same time, producers cast Matt as their guinea pig, the butt of their elaborate joke, so they had to cast someone who would not appear to be just a regular guy but who could also be viewed as a "schmo." Matt's personal circumstances at the time he was chosen in many ways underscored the stereotype of the underachiever: a twenty-something law-school dropout, he was living with his parents and delivering pizza part-time when he was approached by the show's producers. Matt's honest reactions to situations on the show and responses to producers' questions in the daily interviews also conform to typical notions of a loser or "schmo." Matt unabashedly admits to things some men may actually think about but never confess to on camera, such as "I love fake breasts, fake blondes. Maybe it's 'cuz,

like, I can never have one, um, 'cuz I'm always poor."²⁷ When forced to parade in front of house members and cameras alike clad only in a pair of skimpy women's panties in the "These Drawers Aren't Yours" underwear-exchange competition, Matt later confesses that he was "worried about the size down there a little bit." He "didn't want to . . . look all small on TV," and so he "played with it a little bit . . . to get the size up."²⁸ Matt's rather immature outlook on life and relative lack of social skills (at least on camera) in these and other instances are not too far removed from those characteristics of the stereotypical male caught in a perpetual state of arrested development as portrayed by the protagonists in countless Hollywood movies, including *Dude, Where's My Car?* and the *American Pie* trilogy, and on TV, such as the title characters in Mike Judge's *Beavis and Butthead Show* and the endearing loser Philip J. Fry in *Futurama*. In other words, Matt was the ideal person to be cast as the show's "schmo."

The stereotypes that the entire cast embodies, characteristics that writers and editors construct for the actors and highlight in Matt's character, are all exaggerated in the name of comedy. In this way, they are drawn much like the typecast characters found in TV sitcoms. As Andy Medhurst and Lucy Tuck point out in "Situation Comedy and Stereotyping," "characters are necessarily packaged according to easily distinguished 'types' which themselves tend to play upon wider cultural clichés."²⁹ Often used as a type of shorthand for audiences to identify a character in films and TV shows, reality TV shows borrow this convention. As Creed explains, "the desire to reveal the best and worst of human nature is one of the constant features of reality TV programs,"³⁰ and *The Lap of Luxury's* hyperbolic personalities facilitate audience awareness of the types of people who participate in reality programs.

The typecast characters who traverse *The Lap of Luxury* landscape reveal how those roles played by people in the parodied genres are just as scripted, just as fictional. As Creed points out, "the contestants [of reality programs] are not 'innocent' media participants. Although they are not professional actors, they are still, in a sense, giving a performance, playing to the camera, possibly even creating a persona for the program."³¹ It is no secret that reality TV producers select particular types of people. *Survivor*, for example, typically chooses type-A personalities to generate tension among players, and participants themselves also make discreet choices as to which aspects of character they will emphasize or downplay. Some choose to hide their public personae by withholding information about their careers, like Gary Hogeboom in *Survivor 11: Guatemala*, a former NFL quarterback who insisted to fellow survivors, including one contestant who recognized him, that he was a landscaper, and Brian Heidik, winner of *Survivor 5: Thailand*, who claimed that he was a used car salesman and neglected to mention that he also had a lucrative career as an adult film star. Whereas Brian never discussed his reasons for the omission on the show or in later interviews, Gary voiced concern about being voted off *Survivor* if the others found out about his earlier success and financial security. In both cases, Gary and Brian chose to highlight aspects of their public identities that were unassuming (and in Brian's case, not morally questionable) and decidedly lower to middle class to better their chances of winning the million-dollar prize.

Some reality TV contestants construct more complex fictional roles than others, including Jon Dalton of *Survivor 7: Pearl Island*. Calling himself "Jonny

Fairplay” and boasting that he “raped reality TV” with his devious actions on *Survivor*, Jon’s specific goal on *Survivor* was to be the greatest reality TV villain ever.³² He accomplished this goal (and earned a place in the Reality TV Hall of Shame)³³ by lying about the death of his grandmother to garner sympathy from fellow players when he feared he would be voted off the show. In later interviews, Jon said that his purpose was to instill in the American collective memory a character type that he hopes to carry into the world of wrestling, where his “Jonny Fairplay” personality in the ring is a development of the devious character he initially created on *Survivor*. Whether people are competing against others on an island (*Temptation Island*, eight of eleven seasons of *Survivor*, *The Real Gilligan’s Island*), in an opulent mansion (*Big Brother*, *The Average Joe*, *Chains of Love*), in the corporate world (*The Apprentice*), in the military (*Boot Camp*), or around the world (*The Amazing Race*; *The Mole*, Season 1) they are all participating in games staged on elaborately structured playing fields. The comprehensive factors that constitute their individual make-up—their relationships, their careers, their values, their belief systems, in short, their identities outside these games—are secondary or tertiary to those superficial aspects of character most easily exploited by producers and editors and most entertaining to audiences. The exaggerated characters in *The Lap of Luxury* reveal such fictions of identity in a more obvious way.

The Joe Schmo Show that frames *The Lap of Luxury* utilizes metafictional strategies that reveal how reality TV works by exploiting its behind-the-scenes status. In the outer show, the producers make the audience privy to the fraud perpetrated on Matt by airing footage of their plans and strategies. On the first day of shooting just prior to Matt’s arrival on the set, executive producer Rhett Reese tells the actors that they initially need to make their characters believable so that they can “get [Matt] hook, line, and sinker.” “Later,” Reese tells them, “we can afford to get outrageous.”³⁴ Each morning, while Matt engages in his private daily interview, cameras roll in the director’s trailer, where writers, producers, crew, and cast—out of character—plot out their manipulation of Matt and discuss their game strategies. As each episode unfolds, Ralph the host emphasizes this look at the inner workings of *The Lap of Luxury* in direct addresses to viewers, in which he constantly reminds them that what they are witnessing is an experiment and that the game in which Matt is participating is bogus. As he posits in the opening of Episode One: “What would you do if your entire world turned out to be fake? If an army of writers, producers, and actors spent over a year creating TV’s most elaborate experiment around you? If they plotted your every move, recorded it twenty-four hours a day, and put it on national TV? Well, that’s exactly what happened to this guy. Meet Matthew Kennedy Gould, one real guy competing for \$100,000 on a reality show that he doesn’t know is fake.”³⁵ Within this outer frame, the producers run a clock between scenes to let the audience know how long the fiction has sustained itself, and the audience witnesses the cast and crew planning their tactics each morning. Such self-conscious strategies make the audience aware of the show’s purpose, constantly turning viewers’ attention away from the plot and drawing it to the show’s success in achieving its purpose as experiment, as fiction.

And Matt’s ignorance of the show’s premise allows producers a certain level of artistic freedom in exploiting him. In *Joe Schmo*, producers expose the audience to

the editing process as they discuss what the purpose of each day's challenge will be, whether they wish to humiliate Matt, encourage him in the "game," make him believe he has allies and enemies, or even if they want the actresses to string him along with sexual innuendoes and body language. They place Matt in rooms with other contestants to discuss strategies, talk about other players, and even reveal intimate things about their lives.³⁶ To ensure that the fiction will adhere, the show's top-billed writer, Brian Keith Etheridge, poses as one of the contestants. Unlike the other so-called competitors in *The Lap of Luxury*, Brian's character is the only one that is not overtly exaggerated; instead, he looks and acts like a regular guy, a man who is down-to-earth and relatively unassuming, but who also behaves immaturely. For example, in a clip of Matt's final audition, aired in the *Joe Schmo Aftermath* interview, a hidden camera tapes Matt being placed by someone in a room with Brian, who pretends he is also auditioning for a spot in *The Lap of Luxury*. In response to Matt's question about whether or not they are being taped, Brian replies, "I don't think so. I don't know. I hope not because I've been sitting here, picking my nose and watching TV when they told me not to."³⁷ This open admission to such childish antics makes him a mirror image of Matt: he is just another "schmo." His reply elicits laughter from Matt, and it clearly paves the way to their easy rapport later in the show, where Brian as "the buddy" plays the crucial role of Matt's friend and confidant. In this capacity, Brian is able to keep close tabs on Matt and influence him in ways otherwise impossible. Early in the production, when producers fear that Matt has figured out the hoax, Brian checks to see how much he knows. Later, when Matt breaks down in tears following Earl's eviction and contemplates leaving the show, Brian consoles Matt and convinces him to continue with the game, and when the host reveals the show's premise to Matt in the final episode, producers situate Brian to stand by Matt's side to support him. Through the show's physical, mental, and emotional manipulation of Matt, the latter becomes the material that Brian, the other actors, and the producers use to shape the show.

The way the show directs and controls Matt, in turn, reflects how contest-based reality shows in general manipulate their viewers. Through the processes of selection, editing, and framing, the writers and producers of reality TV determine their viewers' emotional responses and reactions to their programs by highlighting those features deemed most entertaining. In *Joe Schmo*, the producers control their audience by only revealing part of the show's purpose. They provide just enough information to rouse interest as their exploitation of Matt plays out. The *Lap of Luxury*, therefore, incorporates conventional post-production features of TV programming that are typically for the benefit of viewers, including music to engage the audience in tense or humorous moments or to establish mood and tone; the voiceover, with the host raising questions about what might happen in the upcoming segment or who might be voted off the show next; and suspense through well-timed commercial breaks, music, or dialogue, especially during immunity and rewards challenges and the eviction ceremonies. Since the *Lap of Luxury* is a fiction, the producers of *Joe Schmo* use such TV conventions to heighten and exploit the tensions of the show, the end result being that they present events as they unfold as if they were part of a *real* reality game show. Such conventions are out of place in a show whose storyline is for the most part scripted, whose participants are actors, and whose outcome is already determined.

Through metafiction, *Joe Schmo* reveals the fictionality inherent in all reality shows. Reality TV, especially the reality game show, can never truly be a microcosmic reflection of the real world, for its true reality is only a game, and the participants in these games are really little more than the products of the collective imaginations of producers, writers, editors, and contestants themselves. Therefore, those participants whom viewers collectively hate (Jerri Mathis, *Survivor 2: Australian Outback*; Omarosa Manigault-Stallworth, *The Apprentice, Surreal Life 5*), collectively love (Rupert Boneham, *Survivor 7: Pearl Islands* and *Survivor 8: All-Stars*; Uchenna and Joyce Agu, *Amazing Race 7*), or all love to hate ("Jonny Fairplay" and Jonathan Baker and Victoria Fuller, *The Amazing Race 6*) can only be as two-dimensional and fictitious as the situations in which they are placed. Most reality shows roll cameras twenty-four hours per day for the entire duration of the game, and producers and editors cut their material down to a one-hour, weekly program, about forty-two minutes of footage without commercials. As Lila Holland points out, "The snappy banter and captivating action that make up the story lines of most reality shows are culled from hundreds of hours of raw footage. That footage must be sifted through, broken down, and put back together to construct the producers' desired results."³⁸ Creed rightly notes, "A great deal of effort is expended to make reality TV look 'real.'"³⁹ By offering its audience a look into the inner workings of reality game shows through its parodic *Lap of Luxury*, *Joe Schmo* openly displays its own architecture, and, by extension, the structure of all reality programming, underscoring how the apparent reality of these shows can only be a fiction.

As *The Joe Schmo Show* uses metafictional parody to reveal the fictions underlying contest-based reality TV, Geoffrey Chaucer parodies Middle English romance in his "Tale of Sir Thopas" to expose the mechanics used in the poet's craft. Chaucer necessarily utilizes some of the same techniques employed by *Joe Schmo*'s producers to signal the metafictional character of his parody, but his concerns are of a more literary nature. Similar to how the producers of *Joe Schmo* use the story-within-a-story structure to present *The Lap of Luxury*, Chaucer casts his parody within the larger context of another story, *The Canterbury Tales*. This overarching narrative, including the "General Prologue," the narrator's "Retraction" at the end, and the links connecting a series of tales, recounts the journey of twenty-nine pilgrims en route to Thomas à Becket's shrine at Canterbury who meet the narrator (Chaucer's fictional persona) at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, outside of London. At the suggestion of Harry Bailey, the host of the inn, each pilgrim agrees to participate in a competition by telling two stories on the way to Canterbury and two more on the journey back, with the host joining the group to act as judge of the tales and Chaucer's narrator tagging along to record them. Whereas the outer story of *Joe Schmo* focuses on one fictional text's use of metafictional parody of reality TV, Chaucer constructs a much more multivalent and textured work, with the outer tale of the pilgrimage encompassing a complex inner frame.

This inner frame comprises a series of generically diverse tales, including romances, *exempla*, saints' lives, *fabliaux*, fables, and sermons, related by a wide range of fictional storytellers who represent different strata of medieval English society. The pilgrims tell stories that form the *Canterbury Tales*, but they also shift the reader back to the pilgrimage itself, the outer frame, when they interact

with one another between tales. Oftentimes, in these segues or links, the pilgrims converse about the storytelling process itself: the gentlefolk in the company comment on the noble and enduring quality of the Knight's tale, the Miller and Reeve argue over the propriety of telling a tale about a carpenter's wife who commits adultery, and Harry Bailey not only asks for a particular tale from the Clerk, requesting that he "precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente, / To make us for oure olde synnes wepe," he also tells him what kind of language to use: "Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye, / That we may understonde what ye seye."⁴⁰ Such conversations about fiction constantly turn outwardly to the context of the pilgrimage. Chaucer uses this outer frame narrative as a pretext to discuss the art of fiction and storytelling as each story unfolds in the inner frame.

He explores art in the *Canterbury Tales* most explicitly in the first of two tales delivered by his narrator, the "Tale of Sir Thopas." The parody imitates the structure of several traditional metrical romances: with its short tail-rhyme stanzas of aabaab or aabccb with a four-four-three stress, occasionally interspersed with stanzas containing an extra bob (aabaabcaac), it approximates the meter of the popular English romances *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, and *Sir Tristrem*. Chaucer's parody also invokes a number of romance motifs found in such popular English texts as *Libeus Desconus*, *King Horn*, *Horn Childe*, *Sir Launfal*, and *Sir Perceval of Gales*. Using conventional elevated and heroic language, the narrator describes a questing knight who encounters a supernatural being while in search of his beloved. As with other Middle English romance narrators, Chaucer's persona launches into digressions with his long descriptive passages of the forest setting (754–71) and the arming of the hero (851–90), and he frequently interrupts his narrative by addressing his audience with such oral-formulaic phrases as "listeth lordes" (712, 833) and "herkneth to my spelle [story]" (897). Chaucer's parody is intertextual in nature, like *The Lap of Luxury*, because it self-consciously situates itself in a recognizable genre by imitating certain features of a number of romances. Middle English romance was as popular with fourteenth-century audiences as reality TV shows are with twenty-first-century viewers, and Chaucer's audience would have recognized the poet's borrowings, adaptations, and transformations of insular romance material.

As *The Lap of Luxury* copies features of contest-based reality TV with the express purpose of revealing those conventions, Chaucer imitates familiar elements of romance in "Sir Thopas" to make audiences aware of the structures that characterize the genre. To create an awareness of the romance conventions he exploits, Chaucer relies on what John Burrow calls the "mean and common" trappings "of affected dignity."⁴¹ Chaucer turns the mystery and sense of otherness that forest settings typically impart to romances into the commonplace: the "wilde best[es]" populating the forest are merely "bukke[s] and hare[s]" (755–56), the forest itself is reduced to a description of herbs (760–65), and the ominous giant haunting the boundary separating the wood from the land of fairies is humorously named Sir Olifaunt (Sir Elephant), who threatens to kill not the hero, as would be expected in a romance, but his horse, crying, "But if thou prike out of myn haunt / Anon I sle thy steede / With mace" (811–13). Such absurd details effect a "comic incongruity" between the material Chaucer borrows from and his narrator's revisions of them, forcing the audience to take notice of them.

As *Joe Schmo* establishes a fundamental difference between its parody and the parodied genre by reconfiguring the essential premise of reality game shows, Chaucer sets his tale apart from the Middle English genre by undermining romance's ostensible *raison d'être*. He achieves this by removing the foundation upon which Middle English romance rests—the quest. The term *romance* is a slippery one, arising from a complex etymology and history of usage,⁴² but by the late fourteenth century, romance in Middle English essentially referred to “accounts of the deeds of a single hero, with emphasis not only on the martial but also on amatory and fanciful episodes.”⁴³ On the surface, Thopas's tale concerns an errant knight seeking love and adventure; however, Chaucer's parodic treatment of these themes empties the quest of any significance. The tale opens with Sir Thopas riding in a forest, a conventional romance setting, but because he is neither outfitted for battle, adventure, or hunting, nor is he engaging in springtime festivities with his peers, his errand in the forest is not clear. Well into Fit One, Thopas hears the song of a thrush. Suddenly falling into “love-longynge” (772), he reveals that the object of his desire is an elf-queen. This particular plot point recalls the romance of *Launfal* in which the title hero has as paramour Dame Tryamour, queen of the fairies, but Thopas's tale of love differs considerably from *Launfal*'s. Whereas Tryamour's character is physically present in *Launfal* and acts in ways that significantly influence the plot, Thopas's unnamed beloved figures into the tale only as a dream. As Thopas exclaims, “‘me dremed al this nyght, pardee / An elf-queene shal my lemman [beloved] be’” (787–88). Indeed, the hero does not even seek a specific fairy lover, for two more times he declares that he will love “an elf-queene” (791, 795, emphasis added), and the narrator describes him as setting off “an elf-queene for t'espye” (799, emphasis added). Apparently, any elf-queen will satisfy Thopas's desire. Rather than searching for a real woman, mortal or supernatural, Thopas seeks only the intangible and unattainable, a fairy woman whom he never meets and who never materializes in the tale. His search for a fiction negates the theme of love altogether, the driving force behind the quest and, therefore, one of the defining features of Middle English romance.

Chaucer treats the other central aspect of the quest in insular romance, adventure, in an equally problematic way. Soon after the narrator reveals Thopas's feelings for his nonexistent lover, the hero meets with Sir Oliphaunt, who claims to be guarding the realm of the fairies. Adventures with supernatural beings are a staple of romance, and giants have appeared in such Middle English romances as *King Horn*, *Octavian*, *Perceval de Galles*, and, of course, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. While encounters with giants add an element of the dramatic and enhance the genre's entertainment value, giants in romance most importantly serve as tests, allowing the hero, through battle, to construct his sense of selfhood, inextricably interwoven with knighthood. The giant, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues, is not only a defining feature of romance, he is that thing by which “[m]ale identity or chivalric subjectivity is constructed.”⁴⁴ But Thopas's lack of preparedness undermines his opportunity for a fight with his opponent, his one moment of adventure and chance for self-realization as both knight and lover. Since he is ill-fitted for battle, Thopas tells the giant that he will come back “[t]omorwe” (818), and he turns tail, reminiscent of Sir Robin fleeing the three-headed knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Without any attire,

purpose, action, or love interest to define him, Thopas, much like Matt, becomes a character lost in a superficial and textual landscape made up of little more than fictions.

Chaucer's treatment of these themes essential to the quest results in a romance that only appears to be about love and adventure but that is really about something else—the construction of fiction. As Alan Gaylord has maintained, the tale is about the poet's craft: "just as the Knight tells about chivalry, the Miller about lechery, and the Prioress about piety, so could Chaucer tell about poetry."⁴⁵ The structure of "Sir Thopas" reinforces the overt fictionality of the poem. John Burrow notes that, with its diminishing stanzas in its three fits, from eighteen in the first to nine in the second to four-and-one-half in the third (a ratio of 4:2:1), "Sir Thopas" literally "narrow[s] away . . . toward nothingness."⁴⁶ Chaucer's text, much like his errant knight, heads nowhere. The narrator's problematic (though humorous) treatment of romance conventions, coupled with the tale's indeterminate meaning, illustrates a fundamental breakdown of the romance itself. Patricia Waugh explains that "one [metafictional] method of showing the function of literary conventions, of revealing their provisional nature, is to show what happens when they 'mal-function.'"⁴⁷ In "Sir Thopas," the narrative and structural levels malfunction through parody, so that Chaucer redirects the audience's attention from a wandering knight whose story leads nowhere to the narrator who constructs such a tale.

The "comic incongruity" between Chaucer's parody and the romance tradition is just as blatant as *Joe Schmo*'s reconfiguration of reality game shows, but whereas *Joe Schmo* must constantly remind the audience of *The Lap of Luxury*'s fictional premise (and Matt's ignorance of it), Chaucer relies on the disparities his parody generates between audience expectations of hearing or reading Chaucer's own persona recite a tale and the narrator's actual delivery of "Sir Thopas." Within the fictional world of the *Canterbury Tales*, the narrator positions himself as a reporter, recording the other pilgrims' tales as they tell them. As reporter, he sets himself apart from the other characters. Following his description of each of the pilgrims in the "General Prologue," he informs the audience that he will "tell of our viage [voyage] / And all the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage" (723–24). Rather than attributing to his persona the artistic construction of the *Canterbury Tales*—for example with a third-person omniscient storyteller as he does in *Troilus and Criseyde*, who bases his tale on a fictional source to recount Troilus's "double sorwe," or with first-person limited narrators as in *Parliament of Fowls*, *House of Fame*, and *Book of the Duchess*, who each puts his "sweven" or dream "into ryme"—Chaucer distances his narrator from the poetic function, resulting in a tension between his fictional persona and his historical authorial presence.⁴⁸ As early as 1598, Thomas Speght remarked that Chaucer created his persona "as though [he] himselfe were not the authour but only the reporter of the rest."⁴⁹ Harry Bailey's comment to the narrator when he unexpectedly calls on him to tell a tale, that "[t]hou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare / For evere upon the ground I se thee stare" (696–97), perhaps provides a visual image that underscores the narrator's occupation: he is not gazing at the ground but looking down at his parchment as he copies down the tales and the exchanges made by the pilgrims. When Harry Bailey asks him to tell a tale, he thrusts

the narrator into a role he did not claim to play, which is in itself unusual in Chaucer's works. Further, according to the agreement made at the Tabard Inn, each pilgrim is to tell a total of four tales, two on the way to Canterbury and two more on the way home. *The Canterbury Tales* is incomplete, just as is "Sir Thopas," so that of the other twenty-nine pilgrims, only twenty-two tell one tale each. Chaucer's narrator is the exception; not only does he temporarily step away from his role as reporter and take on the additional function as storyteller, Chaucer makes him the only storyteller who tells two tales.

Chaucer used his fictional persona in many of his earlier works, including *Book of the Duchess*, *Parliament of Fowls*, *House of Fame*, *Legend of Good Women*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. In each of these texts, Chaucer crafts a narrator whose purpose varies, but who nonetheless delivers a sophisticated and complex narrative. What the audience gets in *The Canterbury Tales* with "Sir Thopas" is a text that appears to be a poorly constructed tale delivered by an inept storyteller. The attribution of Sir Thopas's tale to his own persona generates ambivalence toward the tale itself and the romance tradition in general, for the narrator's tale is the worst among those related by the pilgrims. In fact, Harry Bailey finds it so insufferable that he begs the narrator to stop "for Goddes dignitee" (919), declaring that his "drasty [crappy] rhymyng is nat worth a toord [turd]!" (930). The narrator's reply that it is "the beste rym" that he knows (928) indicates one of two things: either he does not understand the parodic nature of his own text, or he is assuming a naïve role and only pretending not to understand the parody. If Chaucer intends the former, then he further widens the gap between his authorial self and his fictional persona.⁵⁰ If the narrator truly misunderstands his text, Chaucer's deliberate use of his own persona to tell a problematic tale opens his role as storyteller to wider interpretive possibilities: what does it mean when a good poet uses his own persona to tell a bad story?

On a parodic level, such a narrator allows him the opportunity to examine the multiple dimensions of storytelling, particularly the mode of textual transmission explored in the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. Most of the characters recount old, familiar tales that Chaucer transforms for social, political, and artistic reasons.⁵¹ Since the narrator must deliver both of his tales orally (as do the other pilgrims), he must rely on his memory in the retelling of "a rym" he "lerned longe agoon" (709). The oral transmission of stories, particularly of traditional tales that have undergone generations of dissemination like the one the narrator purports to deliver, leaves them open to variation and, it seems with the narrator's tale, to corruption, the type of distortion akin to what Chrétien de Troyes's narrator famously complains about in the prologue to his romance *Erec et Enide*: "This is the tale of Erec, the son of Lac, which those who wish to make their living by storytelling in the presence of counts and kings usually mutilate and spoil."⁵² Like those twelfth-century minstrels Chrétien's narrator denounces for having corrupted Arthurian tales, Chaucer's narrator mangles a Middle English romance because of his poor aptitude as a storyteller. As a result, the storytelling process involved in the recounting of "Sir Thopas" not only produces a parody of romance but of the transmitters of such tales.

But the narrator's mishandling of an old romance is only a fiction. An analogue of Thopas's tale has yet to be discovered and probably never existed. Indeed, Chaucer's narrator indicates that his naïveté is only superficial, for he

shows a keen awareness of the craft of fiction. In the links before and after the narrator's tale, Chaucer's persona and Harry Bailey engage in a critical exchange on the art of storytelling. The narrator does not defend his parodic transformation of insular romance; instead, he explains in great detail the differences that are inevitable in the retelling of familiar texts: "ye woot that every Evaungelist / That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist / Ne seith nat alle thing as his felawe dooth; / But natheless hir sentence is al sooth, / And alle acorden as in hire sentence, / Al be ther in hir telling difference" (945–48). He uses the authoritative variants of the four Gospels to demonstrate how, invariably, people who tell stories about the same subject—in this case, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—will nonetheless recount that material differently. However, such variation, he adds, should be found on the surface only, in the way the story is told. The meaning of each version of a tale (or its "sentence") should be consistent. As he says of the four gospels, "hir sentence is al oon" (953). This lesson in the nature of storytelling instructs the other pilgrims (and Chaucer's audience) on the proper way to interpret tales, including Sir Thopas's. When read literally, the "Tale of Sir Thopas" serves as an example of a poorly constructed text delivered by an unsophisticated narrator: on the surface, it is merely a corrupt version of an old tale. When read figuratively, though, the text's meaning should accord with the alleged source. But since there is no source and, moreover, since "Sir Thopas" is apparently unfinished, Chaucer denies the audience whatever ultimate meaning it might have purported to impart. Here, the narrator shows that he understands the way fiction works, and his adept retelling and translation of Renaud de Louens's Old French *Livre de Melibée et de Dame Prudence* that follows signify his ability to tell a good story if he wishes. His feigned ignorance, then, is at Harry Bailey's expense.

Harry Bailey's response to the narrator's tale reveals a fundamental breakdown in communication between poet and audience. After the Prioress's story of a murdered boy and the child's subsequent martyrdom, which has left all of the pilgrims so "sobre" that "wonder was to se" (692), the host turns to the narrator and insists that he "[t]elle . . . a tale of myrthe, and that right anon" (705–06). The narrator replies that he knows only one, saying "oother tale certes kan I noon" (I certainly know no other tale) (708). Since he clearly knows at least one other story, the prose "Tale of Melibee," the narrator must mean that he knows only one tale "of myrthe" that might satisfy Harry Bailey. Harry's negative and colorful reaction to "Sir Thopas" clearly shows that he not only fails to see the mirth in the tale but that he also misunderstands its parodic nature. Rose explains that this sort of response to parody is not unusual, stating that an audience who does not understand it may believe "that the author is unintentionally misquoting some original source,"⁵³ in this case, the tale the narrator purportedly heard long ago. Chaucer's use of Harry Bailey as the primary audience of the parody both enhances the humor of the tale and highlights its metafictionality.

The narrator's role, as foregrounded by the delivery and reception of a tale about fiction, calls attention to the fictionality of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. In this outer frame, the narrator's determination to record the other pilgrims' tales results in the transcription of a series of orally delivered texts that comprise the *Canterbury Tales* itself. The narrator as transmitter generates tension between history and fiction, between Chaucer the narrator delivering tales and

transcribing others to create a fictional manuscript collection and Chaucer the poet reshaping extant material to create his fictional microcosm of the *Canterbury Tales*. Since “Sir Thopas” and the *Canterbury Tales* are both ostensibly incomplete, any potential meaning of the inner-frame tales and outer-frame pilgrimage becomes open-ended and ultimately, indeterminate.

In texturing their parodies with metafictional layers, the producers of *Joe Schmo* and Chaucer reinvent their respective generic traditions. “Sir Thopas” and *The Lap of Luxury* obviously differ from their parodied genres because they continually turn their gaze back upon the tradition from which they borrow. In this sense, the imitation found in them differs from Aristotelian notions of *mimesis*, for they each copy “only an already modeled reality” found in other texts and not in life: their very existence relies on the presence of other texts.⁵⁴ Parody’s propensity to “refunction” genres was first discussed by Russian formalist theorists to describe the transformative effect of parody on worn out forms, or what Rose calls “the new literary functions gained by a text in the context of the parody,” by baring the structures that underlie genres.⁵⁵ The creators of *Joe Schmo* and Chaucer both use parody to achieve such metafictional ends. To do so effectively, they deliberately create imperfect texts, transforming their reality TV game show and Middle English romance to make audiences more aware of their structures. What is borne out in these self-consciously flawed texts is a new kind of reality TV show and medieval romance. *The Joe Schmo Show* is a different type of contest-based reality TV show because it builds into its structure a critical assessment of reality TV through its gaze into *The Lap of Luxury*. By redirecting attention to backgrounded elements of reality TV programming, the show gives viewers a more enlightened understanding of reality programs and a critical awareness of how shows can manipulate viewers. It also exposes, in ways unlike other reality programs, viewers’ own complicity in the perpetuation and proliferation of reality programs. As long as people watch these programs, these shows will continue to be made and aired.

Such innovative strategies are not new in Chaucer’s works, of course. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, for example, Chaucer transformed Boccaccio’s Italian romance *Il Filostrato* by blending into it conventions of history, tragedy, epic, and even comedy, while casting it within a Boethian framework and reworking it into English. What emerged from this reworking was a new historio-romance on par with and perhaps surpassing the excellence of its Italian source. In “Sir Thopas,” Chaucer explores romance in a different way, through metafictional parody as delivered by a problematic narrator to an unsophisticated listener. Perhaps, as Glenn Wright proposes, “Chaucer is issuing a meta-literary warning about conventionality: ‘a highly conventional art is in constant danger of becoming an empty art.’”⁵⁶ If romance is art devoid of significance, as we find in “Sir Thopas,” then perhaps Chaucer is directing us to the real-world issues that are explored in a moral tale such as *Melibee*’s. *Joe Schmo* and “Sir Thopas” offer critiques of their targets through making obvious the potential problems found in reality TV and Middle English romance. As refunctioned genres, they operate on two levels simultaneously: on the one hand, they become part of the traditions they target; on the other hand, they offer a critique of them. They are, therefore, creative works of fiction as well as critical assessments of fiction. Since they are parodies, their very existence depends on the texts preceding them; they can never be entirely new inventions but only reinventions.

It is no surprise, then, that both parodies, as presented through the outer, fictional realities of the world of *Joe Schmo* and the medieval pilgrimage, comment on the historical, real worlds of twenty-first-century America and fourteenth-century England. Waugh argues that “metafictional parody reveals how a particular set . . . of conventions [are] recognized as ‘literature’ by its [audience]. . . and it considers what relevance these may still have for readers situated in a different point of history.”⁵⁷ More than anything, *Joe Schmo* relies on stereotypes so that it can reveal how they break down through the character of Matt. No matter how much he conforms to the producers’ preconceived notions of the typical American male, he nonetheless breaks away from them on several occasions. For example, in the “Hands on a High-Priced Hooker” challenge, the producers plan for Matt to win immunity (by keeping his body part on the “hooker” the longest) so he can move to the master suite and live in closer proximity to the directors. Relying on the stereotypical American male fantasy of being with beautiful (and, for many, unattainable) women, the producers concoct a plan to ensure that Matt will not give up in the game by having him place his hand on the pornography star’s bare breast. Mere minutes into the challenge, Matt removes his hand first (thereby taking the loser’s lot of being moved into the laundry room), saying that a good night’s rest away from his bed mates means more to him than living in the comfort of the mansion or even than holding a woman’s breast. Matt’s deviation from expected behavior shocks both cast and crew, and they scramble to rework the next few segments to get Matt back in the mansion. As a stunned Brian later exclaims, “What warm-blooded male is going to let go of a porn star’s breast without having to be drug off first?”⁵⁸ While such comments belie the creators’ belief in their own fiction and their authorial power over Matt, on a deeper level they question modern American assumptions of masculinity.

Though Matt often deviates from the Joe Schmo role in which the show has cast him, *Joe Schmo* nonetheless calls attention to those things Matt does typify as a man in American society today. Although Matt is in his late twenties, he is still standing on the threshold between adolescence and adulthood. Though he possesses ambition, he obviously lacks a clear sense of direction: he desires to better his life, but its realization is suspect, for he does not wish to attain it through avenues such as hard work, seeking a higher education, taking on an apprenticeship, soul-searching, or developing a mature sense of direction. Instead, he plays a game. And he tells the other contestants that he has joined the game simply because he “ha[s] nothing else to do.”⁵⁹ Matt wants to achieve the American capitalist dream by trying to win a game, and he sees the \$100,000 prize—a sizable sum, to be sure—as the solution to his stagnant life and the key to his financial and social success: “Believe me,” he tells the others, “getting that money will change my place in life.”⁶⁰

Matt’s attitude toward life is not that uncommon in men today. According to social analysts Marian Salzman, Ira Matathia, and Ann O’Reilly in *The Future of Men*, the fundamental changes in gender roles, expectations, and identities in the last half century have effectively dismantled traditional models of men as society’s providers and protectors and have displaced them as authority figures over family, the workplace, houses of worship, and women.⁶¹ They go on to explain that “[s]ociety’s changing notions of who men should be, combined

with media images that deride who they currently are, leave many men bewildered as to whether they can do anything right.”⁶² This changing idea of what it means to be a man in American society may explain the apparent conflict within Matt that manifests itself on the show through his words, behavior, and actions. While he is surely motivated in part by the desire to ingratiate himself with the others to improve his chances of winning the game, Matt vacillates between how he wishes to behave and how he thinks he ought to act. He clings to socially accepted behavior of the past while recognizing at the same time the inappropriateness of such behavior today. In some ways, Matt represents the modern American everyman. He is the poster child for those men who are seeking to find their place in a new society whose rules are increasingly determined by those who are not white, male, or heterosexual.

Whereas *Joe Schmo* exposes the problems inherent in an American masculinity in transition, Chaucer explores fourteenth-century society's obsession with manhood as symbolized by knighthood. In *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, Lee Patterson explains how knighthood transcended the relatively simple concepts of occupation or social station; rather, it was a man's “very mode of being, an ideological conditioning that preclude[d] critical self-reflection because it wholly condition[ed] self-construction.”⁶³ This construction of identity included the adherence to a strict code of virtues and values, including “loyalty (to the knight's political superior), prowess (which includes both praise of the rash willingness to throw oneself into danger—*hardinesse*—and the skill to deal with that danger), *franchise*, or an openhanded largesse to one's fellows and followers, and courtesy to women, children, and the elderly.”⁶⁴ Such a model of knightly behavior was in itself inherently problematic, for it always far exceeded reality: Cohen argues that “[t]he chivalric hero represents a kind of hypermasculinity, an exaggerated and idealized version of maleness that is promulgated with a social intention. . . . No human body can actually occupy the impossible space of knighthood's inhuman ideals, and so these same bodies can be compelled to repeat its theatrical rituals through the promise of the possibility of one day coinciding with the permanence that chivalry's fictive models offer.”⁶⁵

Chaucer attacks these fictional and unattainable representations of manhood not only through the “comic incongruity” he creates in setting, detail, and description, but particularly through his title hero. The exotic “fer coun-tree” from which Thopas hails is only Flanders, a medieval region touching the northeastern border of France and known in Chaucer's day less for its production of bold knights and more for its textile industry and wealthy mercantile class (718). Chaucer emphasizes Thopas's mundane origins with the description of his skills in wrestling and archery, not very knightly pastimes. Thopas also does not conform to a conventional image of knighthood. He is outfitted with a scabbard in the arming scene but no sword, and his features, described by the narrator as “[w]hit” as fine bread (“payndemayn”) with lips “rede as rose,” a complexion “lyk scarlet,” and a “seemly nose” (725–29), resemble those of a woman more than they do any generic literary knight's.⁶⁶ Indeed, Roland Smith has effectively shown that the various forms of the name *Thopas* were only ever used in medieval literary texts to describe women.⁶⁷ Through these descriptions, Chaucer drives home the fact that Thopas is no manly, noble hero like Gawain, Launcelot, Athelstan, or Horn.

The poet's naming his knight after a semi-precious stone (*Thopas* being a medieval variant spelling of *topaz*) is especially telling. In part, his name contributes to the parodic playfulness of the text: as W.W. Skeat remarked, the name is "an excellent title for such a gem of a knight,"⁶⁸ and John Conley has demonstrated how Chaucer's use of the name contrasts the superlative qualities of the gem with Thopas's faults.⁶⁹ But it also undermines the "hypermasculinity" of knighthood by offering its inverse image. Erik Simon Kooper has shown that medieval lapidaries often list as one of the stone's properties its ability to act as "a hollow mirror, reflecting images upside down."⁷⁰ Taking Kooper's observation a step further, Keith Taylor argues that "the actions and demeanor of Sir Thopas ultimately show him to be the distorted inverse of all that the members of the medieval audience had come to expect from the heroes of their romances."⁷¹ In constructing Thopas to stand as the antithesis to the medieval paradigm of masculinity, Chaucer reveals the flaws in the ideal.

Through metafictional parody, the producers of *Joe Schmo* and Geoffrey Chaucer show how literary fictions create their imaginary worlds. Whether these invented spaces are games or stories, they give us a glimpse into the inner workings of fiction. As *The Lap of Luxury* and "Sir Thopas" mirror the outer frames of *The Joe Schmo Show* and *Canterbury Tales*, so do these outer frames reflect upon modern and medieval historical realities. They call attention to how reality TV can only be as real as writers, producers, and participants choose to construct it, and Middle English romance can only relate to any real notions of knighthood through exposing the ideal for what it is, a fiction. By addressing serious societal issues—the masculine ideal, the relationship between fiction and reality—the producers of *Joe Schmo* and Chaucer invite their audiences to consider their own expectations of manhood and, further, to explore their understanding of how fiction imitates reality. Ultimately, the *Joe Schmo Show* and *Canterbury Tales* prove that, like fiction, reality is "similarly constructed, similarly 'written.'"⁷²

Notes

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1. *Spike TV*, <http://www.spiketv.com/>.
2. Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 22. Margaret Rose's term "refunctioning," in reference to formalist theories of parodic functions, is discussed below. See her *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 29 and 52.
3. Rose demonstrates how the correlation of parody with the burlesque reduces parody to the trivial because of the element of ridicule found in burlesque comedy, an aspect she characterizes as destructive: *Parody*, pp. 25–27. The association of parody with satire also emphasizes negative tendencies not necessarily found in parody. Linda Hutcheon explains that while both devices "imply critical distancing and therefore value judgments," satire "generally uses that distance to make a negative statement about that which is satirized" whereas any "real attack" in parody would be "self-destructive": *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 43–44.

4. Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, p. 3; see also Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. ix.
5. In his *Poetics* 2.1448a, Aristotle credits Hegemon with first using the device ("Hegemon of Thasos, the first composer of parodies. . . ." [*Ἡγήμων δὲ ὁ Θάσιος ὁ τὰς παρεδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος. . .*]) in works such as the *Gigantomachia*: Aristotle's *Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, with a Critical Text and Translation of The Poetics*, trans. S.H. Butcher, intro. John Gassner, 4th edn. (New York: Dover, 1951).
6. Fred W. Householder, "ΠΑΡΩΔΙΑ (Parody)," *Classical Philology* 39.1 (1944): 1–9; Rose, *Parody*, pp. 6–29.
7. Rose, *Parody*, p. 25.
8. Rose, *Parody*, p. 52. Most now define parody in a broad sense. Dentith defines it as "any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice": *Parody*, p. 9. Linda Hutcheon, who bases her definition largely on twentieth-century usage, states that parody, "in its ironic 'trans-contextualization' and inversion, is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony": *Theory of Parody*, p. 32. What is apparent in these and other definitions is the recognition of the validity of parody as both a critical and evaluative tool. For an example of a recent and more restrictive definition, see Gerard Genette, *Palimpsestes* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 33.
9. Rose, *Parody*, p. 52.
10. John Corner, "Documentary Realism," in *The Television Genre Book*, ed. Glen Creeber (London: British Film Institute, 2001), p. 127 [126–29].
11. Bernadette Casey et al., eds., *Television Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 67.
12. Barbara Creed, *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2003), p. 40.
13. Creed, *Media Matrix*, p. 40.
14. In *Big Brother* (CBS), a disparate group of people, living together for three months in isolation, vie for prizes and rewards and try to avoid being voted off the show. The last person remaining in the house wins \$500,000. In *The Bachelor* (ABC), an eligible man must choose one woman among twenty-five to date. Each week, the bachelor goes on single and group dates with the women and decides who will stay or leave until only one woman is left. In *The Bachelorette* (ABC), a single woman chooses one among twenty-five men. *Joe Millionaire* (FOX), the first reality contest-based dating show with a twist, focused on female contestants competing for the affections of a wealthy playboy, Evan Marriott. The joke was on the women, for Marriott was really a construction worker who earned less than \$19,000 per year.
15. In the American version of *Survivor*, sixteen contestants are sent to a remote and exotic locale for thirty-nine days with few or no provisions and are initially divided into two or three tribes. Every three days, tribes compete against one another for immunity from elimination; the tribe that loses the challenge is sent to Tribal Council, where it must vote off a member of its group. Tribes also compete in rewards challenges for prizes to help them survive. At some point in the game, the tribes merge into one group, and the game shifts from communal survival to individual rewards and immunity and the chance to win the million-dollar prize.
16. Rose, *Parody*, p. 30.
17. Rose, *Parody*, p. 31.

18. Rose, *Parody*, p. 45.
19. Episode One, "Meet the Family," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show: Season One Uncensored!*, DVD, directed by Danny Salles (2003; Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2004).
20. The last one standing was guaranteed a place in the final vote for the million-dollar prize. The survivors, Kathy, Neleh, and Vecepia, stood for over four hours before Kathy lost her balance and fell. The jury later voted for Vecepia as the ultimate survivor. Various incarnations of the "Hand Hard on Idol" challenge have appeared in three other seasons.
21. Episode One, "Hands Off," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
22. Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), p. 1.
23. See Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1984).
24. Episode One, "Meet the Family," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
25. Episode Seven, "The Casting Process." Disc Three, *Joe Schmo*. This segment, a post-production interview with Matt, was originally aired immediately after the show's finale as "*The Joe Schmo Show*, the Aftermath."
26. Episode Seven, "The Big Reveal," Disc Three, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
27. Episode One, "Hands Off," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
28. Episode One, "Molly's Underwear," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
29. Andy Medhurst and Lucy Tuck, "Situation Comedy and Stereotyping," in *Television Times: A Reader*, ed. John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (London: Arnold, 1996), p. 113 [111–16].
30. Creed, *Media Matrix*, p. 34.
31. Creed, *Media Matrix*, p. 41.
32. Wireless Flash, "Jonny Fairplay: 'I Raped Reality TV,'" 9 September 2005, <http://www.flashnews.com/news/wfn5050908J3714.html>.
33. The Reality TV Hall of Shame was created for those who "do something extraordinarily stupid, shameful, or painful to watch." David Bloomberg, "Introducing the Reality TV Hall of Shame," 10 September 2002, <http://www.realitytvhallofshame.com/cgibin/ae.pl?mode=1&article=article1001.art&page=1>.
34. Episode One, "Meet the Family," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
35. Episode One, "Meet the Family," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
36. When asked after the show if he was suspicious of being moved around so much, Matt said that he thought that's what reality shows did.
37. Episode Seven, "The Big Reveal," Disc Three, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
38. Lila Holland, "Reality Show Workers Organize for Rights," 22 June 2005, http://www.tv.com/story/story.html&story_id=370.
39. Creed, *Media Matrix*, p. 35.
40. All citations of Chaucer's works are taken from Larry Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). The pilgrims' comments on "The Knight's Tale" occur in "The Miller's Prologue," lines 3111–12; the exchange between the Miller and Reeve occur in "The Miller's Prologue," lines 3141–66; and Harry Bailey's request to the Clerk is found in "The Clerk's Prologue," lines 12–20.
41. John Burrow, "'Sir Thopas' in the Sixteenth Century," in *Middle English Studies: Presented to Norman Davies in Honour of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Douglas Gray and E.G. Stanley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) p. 75 [69–91].
42. The term *romans* (*romanȝ*) was originally used in a linguistic sense as a way to distinguish various forms of vulgarized Latin from Latin; later, it came to refer solely to French. A semantic shift occurred in Old French and later in Middle English,

- and the term *romance* took on two additional, but related, meanings: in Middle English, it referred to the process of translation and writing, from Latin into French or from French into English. In another sense, it came to be associated with a particular literary form. See especially Paul Strohm, "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English Romance," *Genre* 10 (1977): 1–28 and "Middle English Narrative Genres," *Genre* 13 (1980): 379–88. See also Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, "The Shape of Romance in Medieval France," in *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta Kreuger (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 13–28, W.R.J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London: Longman, 1987), and the *Middle English Dictionary*.
43. Strohm, "Middle English Narrative Genres," 381. See also John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance," *Chaucer Review* 15 (1980): 45 [44–62 and 168–81].
 44. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. xix.
 45. Alan Gaylord, "Chaucer's Dainty 'Dogerel': The 'Elvyssh' Prosody of *Sir Thopas*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1979): 101–02 [83–104].
 46. J[ohn] A. Burrow, "Sir Thopas: An Agony in Three Fits," *Review in English Studies* 22 (1971): 57 [54–58].
 47. Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 31.
 48. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* 1.1, Benson, p. 473; *Book of the Duchess*, l. 1332, Benson, p. 346.
 49. *The Workes of our Ancient and Learned English Poet Geoffrey Chaucer, Newly Printed 1598*, p. 92, cited in Shinsuki Ando, "Some Reflections on the *Tale of Sir Thopas*," in *Genres, Themes and Images in English Literature; from the Fourteenth to the Fifteenth Century: The J.A.W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Purgina, 1986*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1988), p. 36.
 50. This is not the first time that Chaucer has generated ambiguity about the role of his persona. In *Book of the Duchess*, for instance, the narrator has been read as either a naïve and unsophisticated character who does not understand a weeping knight's loss of his beloved Blaunche or as a character who only pretends to misunderstand the knight's distress.
 51. See *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales (II)*, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, 2 vols. (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2002). This is an update of W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster, eds., *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Chicago: Humanities Press, 1940).
 52. *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, trans. David Staines (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 1.
 53. Rose, *Parody*, p. 42.
 54. Seymour Chatman, "Parody and Style," *Poetics Today* 22.2 (2001): 35 [25–39].
 55. Rose, *Parody*, p. 29. On Russian Formalist theory, see especially the work of Viktor Shklovsky and Boris Tomashevsky. Hutcheon perceives an implied ameliorative effect of the formalists' use of 'parody' but still recognizes the capacity for parody to effect change within a genre (*Theory of Parody*, p. 36).
 56. Glenn Wright, "Modern Inconveniences: Rethinking Parody in *The Tale of Sir Thopas*," *Genre* 30 (1997): 188 [167–94]. In this passage Wright quotes A. McL. Trowne, "The English Tail-Rhyme Romances," *Medium Aevum* 1 (1932): 92 [87–108 and 169–82].
 57. Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 67.
 58. Episode One, "Hands Off," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
 59. Episode One, "The First Supper," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.
 60. Episode One, "The First Supper," Disc One, *The Joe Schmo Show*.

61. Marian Salzman, Ira Matathia, and Ann O'Reilly, *The Future of Men* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 1.
62. Salzman and O'Reilly, *The Future of Men*, p. 48.
63. Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 79.
64. Leo Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), p. 82.
65. Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 83.
66. Alan Gaylord characterizes this description as being "too pretty. These are lady-words for our hero": "Chaucer's Dainty 'Dogerel,' 90. See also Ando, "Some Reflections on the *Tale of Sir Thopas*," pp. 33–35 [31–39].
67. Roland Smith, "Two Chaucer Notes," *Modern Language Notes* 51.5 (1936):5 [314–7].
68. W.W. Skeat, *The Complete Works of Chaucer*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894–97), 5:183.
69. John Conley, "The Peculiar Name *Thopas*," *Studies in Philology* 73.1 (1976): 57–60 [42–61]. Conley gives a full summary of the various arguments that *Thopas*'s name primarily refers to chastity and refutes them.
70. E[rik] S[imon] Kooper, "Inverted Images in Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*," *Studia Neophilologica* 56 (1984): 148 [147–54]. He argues that it signifies the reflective qualities of the two tales Chaucer's narrator relates, namely that "Melibee is in many ways the inverted reflection of *Thopas*" (152).
71. Keith Taylor, "The Middle English Parody/Burlesque," in *Companion to Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. Laura Cooner Lambdin and Robert Thomas Lambdin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 319 [315–35].
72. Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 18.

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CHAPTER 2

“SHE APPEARS AS BRIGHTLY RADIANT AS SHE ONCE WAS FOUL”: MEDIEVAL CONVERSION NARRATIVES AND CONTEMPORARY MAKEOVER SHOWS

Angela Jane Weisl

In medieval texts such as the plays of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim and the epic Prise d'Orange, and in modern makeover shows such as Extreme Makeover or What Not To Wear, the transformative experience of conversion is accomplished through a rhetoric of self-abnegation and submission to greater authorities. Thus, narratives of transformation, medieval and modern, ultimately present anxieties inherent in societies that attempt a simultaneous combination of exclusion and incorporation.

On the surface of things—which is where a good portion of this inquiry takes place, although perhaps not in the same sense as the introductory phrase implies—a medieval conversion narrative and a contemporary makeover show appear to have so little in common as to be strange bedfellows. However, it is exactly at the surface, or perhaps in their understanding of the surface, that they are inextricably linked. Concerned with transformations—“the word [conversion] itself comes from a Latin word that means to change or transform one thing into another”¹—both genres employ substantially similar rhetoric to reach the same goals. A process as well as an event, conversion and makeovers both work in two directions, from society inward and from the individual outward. For those in need of change (‘need’ being a fairly loosely defined term), social assumptions and conventions provide the models and options for conversion, and the transformation takes place on the body and in the mind of the individual, who then returns to society in a different place. If Hrotsvit of Gandersheim’s dramas are rarely considered in the same breath as the Learning Channel’s *What Not To Wear*, they—as well as many of their medieval and modern analogues—offer surprisingly similar goals, played out on the surface in unsuperficial ways.

In Hrotsvit of Gandersheim’s play *The Conversion of the Harlot Thais*, the scholar Pafnutius tells his disciples that “a certain shameless woman dwells in

this land.”² Because she is “a grave peril” to all the citizens, Pafnutius determines that he must visit the Harlot Thaïs “to see if perchance she might be recovered from her worthless and frivolous life” (98). With the confidence of his disciples and the assistance of the young men of her town, he decides to approach her. Appearing at her home, he requests audience and confronts Thaïs with her sins. Saying that he “shudders at her presumption” and bewails her “sure perdition,” he suggests that she deserves to be damned. He wishes that she “were pierced through all [her] flesh with pain / so that [she] wouldn’t dare to give [her]self to perilous lust again” (101). Thaïs responds, “Your severe reproach’s dart / pierces the inmost recesses of my heart,” and asks, “How can there be place now for appalling lust in my heart when it is filled entirely with the bitter pangs of sorrow / and the new awareness of guilt, fear and woe?” (101). Assuring her that if she follows his lead and withdraws herself “to a secret place, / where [she might] reflect upon [herself and her] former ways / and lament the enormity of [her] sins,” Pafnutius convinces Thaïs to go, but not before she has gathered her “ill-begotten and depraved” wealth (101). Although Pafnutius assures her that she will have no need for it where they’re going, Thaïs points out, “I was not planning on saving it for myself, nor giving it to friends. I don’t even wish to give it to the poor because I don’t think the prize of sin is fit for good” (101). She then feeds her wealth “all to the fire, until it is turned to ash,” so that “nothing is left of what I acquired through sin,” as these things are “the end of my sinful life” (101–02). In so doing, Thaïs also takes leave of her former lovers, rejecting her past sins and saying that the burning of her goods assures that she will never again give in to lust and departs with Pafnutius.

This rejection of lovers and goods leads Pafnutius to say, “Oh how you have changed from your prior condition,” although Thaïs already looks forward to greater alterations, saying “[p]erhaps, God willing, / I’ll be changed into a better being” (102, 103). Change is not difficult for God, Pafnutius suggests, although He, Himself is unchangeable. Thaïs requests that Pafnutius chart her course and adds that she wishes to imitate his deeds. Led to a cloister of holy virgins, Thaïs is instructed to spend her days performing her penance; this penance involves her being “obscured in a small cell, so that she may contemplate her sins undisturbed” (104). Although the Abbess fears for the “[s]oftness of her delicate disposition,” and Thaïs also expresses great anxiety that this punishment will be “difficult for my weak nature to bear” (particularly having to perform all her bodily functions in the same room), Pafnutius persists in his contention that his “little she-goat, recently snatched from the teeth of wolves” will be cured and will “cast aside the rough pelt of a goat, she will be clothed with the soft wool of the lamb” (105, 104). Thaïs enters her cell, assured that the “more perfectly you humiliate yourself, the faster you will earn forgiveness,” and she is urged to “[s]truggle manfully” in order to attain triumph (106). Three years later, Thaïs is released, noting that she has spent her time enumerating “my manifold sins and wickedness and gathered them into a bundle of crime.” Pafnutius assures her that “it is time to lessen your fear / and to begin to have hopeful cheer,” and notes that she must “remain steadfast in fearing God and continue to love him forever” (109–10). Thaïs dies, redeemed, fifteen days later, a penitent rewarded with the gift of grace, with Pafnutius praying that she join “the white lambs” who “may enter eternal joys” (110–11).

At the start of each episode of The Learning Channel's *What Not To Wear*, Stacy London and Clinton Kelly inform the audience of the sartorial failings of their latest subject, who, for whatever reason, cannot figure out how to dress successfully and appropriately for his or (more usually) her life. Speaking to the audience, they show examples of the subject's fashion sins, accompanied by commentary from the subject's family and friends about these clothing disasters; these scenes always include the subject being interviewed about his or her style, as members of the show's crew pose as "market researchers." After this preamble, Stacy and Clinton appear at the subject's house, work, or at a party and corner the victim, announcing, "We're from TLC's *What Not To Wear*." In a recent episode, Stacy and Clinton surprised Christine Gill, a Seattle firefighter, who, despite having a body Clinton described as being "in fantastic shape," dressed entirely in athletic clothing. Their stated goals were "to make her proud to show off those limbs" and "to make her look like a girl."³

After offering her a Visa card with \$5,000 to spend on new clothes in exchange for "giving yourself over to us, mind, body, and your entire wardrobe," Stacy and Clinton then showed the secret footage of an even more humiliated Christine in front of the friends responsible for her nomination.⁴ After this public humiliation, Christine confessed to being "so surprised, in shock," but agreed to Stacy and Clinton's request that she "come to New York and shop with us for a week."⁵ In New York, Christine was forced into the 360-degree mirror in her old clothes while Stacy and Clinton critiqued her baggy jeans, t-shirts, and clunky shoes. With the goals of "getting a little bit more curve on your figure" (Stacy) and "looking more feminine" (Clinton), Christine was shown her "rules"—the types of clothing to look for and try on while shopping.⁶ In a ritual performed in every episode, Stacy and Clinton then proceeded, despite some of Christine's protests, to throw away all her clothes into large garbage bins while she watched. Finally, Christine was set loose with her Visa card.

After two days of shopping, one alone, one with Stacy and Clinton, and a day of restyling by hair and makeup specialists, Christine confessed, "I think my confidence will be boosted up," and also commented, "information that Carmindy [the makeup artist] gave me was very helpful."⁷ Trying on her new clothes for Stacy and Clinton, she suggested that "everything's awesome" and "I feel more confident; I'm proud of the way I look." In line with her advisors' desires, she noted, "I feel like my feminine side has been brought out" and that "everyone's reaction puts a big smile on my face... I stand up straighter, it feels good."⁸

On the surface, Christine and Thaïs may not seem to have a great deal in common, yet an examination of both their transformation processes suggests remarkable similarities. Both are surprised by knowledgeable experts who come to save them from their sins (of which everyone is aware); Pafnuitus, a theologian, and Stacy and Clinton, fashion experts, travel to find these lost souls and lead them to the straight and narrow path. Both are required to leave their homes and get rid of their belongings, although Thaïs seems less nostalgic and more eager to part with her 400 pounds of gold than Christine does with her star-patterned t-shirts. Through meditation on themselves and their failings in small, enclosed spaces, they are both brought to the truth. If on the surface, Christine's week in New York and hour or so in the 360-degree mirror seem rather shorter

and less intense than Thäis's three years in her anchorhold, they actually take up significantly more narrative space. Unlike Thäis, who does her meditations in private, Christine's self-examination is played out before the multiple eyes of audience and advisors, echoed in the perpetual reflection of the mirror. Her "time away," taking up the entire show rather than one short paragraph of the play, stresses the distance between her former place of error and her current place of education, between the "new" and "old" Christine (which the voice-over asks us to "remember" at the start of the show's final segment, suggesting that we might have forgotten her initial look within the hour, as her transformation is so complete), even more fully than Thäis's withdrawal from the world can. After emerging Thäis has certainly rejected sin and found God, and Christine has more literally followed Pafnutius's hopes and has "cast aside the rough pelt of a goat, [to] be clothed with the soft wool of the lamb" (104). If Thäis has become a lamb of God, as Pafnutius suggests in his final words, Christine has at least managed to dress like one. Thäis receives the ultimate reward of salvation and joy; Christine too "feels good," is more confident, and is ready "to try new things I wouldn't have tried before."⁹

The transformative experience of conversion, whether the rejection of one religious tradition in favor of another (in the case of most European medieval narratives, paganism to Christianity) or sin to grace, informs a wide variety of medieval texts, from the prototype of Augustine's *Confessions* to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim's dramas, the epic *Prise d'Orange*, or the romances of *Ferumbras* and the *King of Tars*. In *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages*, James Muldoon notes (as cited above) that the "word itself comes from a Latin word that means to change or transform one thing into another."¹⁰ This transformative experience often acts in both soul and body, one a reflection of the other. Although his examples are primarily post-medieval, V. Bailey Gillespie, in his study of conversion and personal identity, notes multiple examples of converts healed in soul and body in a moment.¹¹ If Thäis's external or physical conversion from "she goat" to "white lamb" is only metaphorical, for many of her medieval counterparts, including Mary in Hrotsvit's other play, *Abraham*, that takes up a similar story, this transformative experience is literally both internal and external; the conversion takes place in the heart, but it is made equally manifest in the body, and both are represented in a striking rhetoric that pairs outside and inside experience as dual representations of change. In the context of their narratives these conversions are always positive events; nonetheless they suggest challenges and problems within medieval society, calling into focus attitudes toward race, gender, sexuality, and otherness that need co-opting into the dominant system as a means of controlling what appears dangerous or threatening to the social order.

This rhetoric finds a modern home in the vast number of makeover shows that pepper the TV landscape. The requisite physical change essential to the genre—whether brought on by a new wardrobe, diet and exercise, or plastic surgery—appears to reflect, both for the contestants and the audience, a more vital and essential internal transformation. In these, as in their medieval counterparts, the process of change often includes sacrifice and pain, a kind of self-abnegation and submission to greater authorities that lead the penitent from error into perfection. Thus an alteration of the physical self becomes much more than a change

of appearance, producing a new world of confidence, self-belief, and ultimately success, whether in careers, love, or acceptance. The popularity of these shows is part of a reality TV explosion that includes shows ranging from the more innocent—or at least more innocuous—*A Makeover Story* and *What Not To Wear* (TLC) and *How Do I Look?* (Style), which deal with purely superficial changes in clothes, hair, and makeup, to the more invasive and insidious *Extreme Makeover* (ABC), *I Want a Famous Face* (MTV), and, perhaps most problematic, *The Swan* (FOX). If the latter shows attack the body through plastic surgery, *The Biggest Loser* (NBC) purports to do the same through diet and exercise. *Made* (MTV), specifically for teenagers, attempts to use both traditional makeover tools and life coaching to help misfits succeed in the mire of high school. All of these shows involve various kinds of tests and trials; many involve intense emotional and physical pain. Just as in conversion, which puts forward a dialectic of wrong (pagan, sinner, whore) and right (repentant Christian), the whole rhetoric of improvement on these makeover shows implies fixed categories of “bad” (what they are) and “good” (what they are to become). These are socially defined and serve to control alternatives to social norms of behavior, gender identity, and sexuality (men urged to be more “masculine,” women more “feminine,” “sexy,” “womanly,” always reminded “you’re a girl”). 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 changing from the “she goat” to the “white lamb,” Thai’s conversion is metaphorically physical; in Hrotsvit’s similar play *Abraham*, the prostitute Mary emerges from twenty years in an anchorhold where she has attempted to atone for her previous sins. Wearing a hair shirt and “weakened by the constant exercise of vigils and fastings,” and forcing “her tender body to follow her soul’s mandate” and observe “the strictest rules, bearing penance’s weight” so that “the filth of her sinful delight / be purged by the bitter severity of her plight,” Mary laments her fate with all her strength so that she may “become an example of conversion / for those whom she was the cause of perdition.”¹² Mary has gone from an example of sin to an example of potential salvation, and in so doing “appears as brightly radiant as she once was foul.”¹³ If, as a sinner, she “lacerated her face and her hands, / tore her clothes amidst sighs, / pulled out her hair, making herself ugly, it is with her conversion that her true beauty returns.”¹⁴ While an essentially spiritual change, Hrotsvit nonetheless casts it in physical terms—a choice that makes sense for a drama, even if, as many conjecture, hers were never performed—yet the physical “radiance” becomes a transformative sign of her transcendence, just as her scratched face and ripped clothing stand for her earlier defilement.

Hrotsvit’s conversion narratives suggest connections to physical appearance that are somewhat ambiguous; her whores are generally rendered asexual through their anchorholds, which simultaneously diminish their sexual attractiveness while emphasizing their spiritual radiance, physically embodied, upon their exits from confined spaces. If this stress upon physical appearance is in part a function of drama (which generically thus includes TV makeovers), it also suggests more deeply that beauty has something essential to do with identity and meaning within the narrative of transformation. This ambiguous connection is

made more fully manifest in a wide range of medieval narratives in which conversion plays a major but less central role. In the *Prise d'Orange* of the Guillaume d'Orange cycle of *chansons de gestes*, in *Aucassin et Nicolette*, in the later Middle English versions of the Sultan of Babylon stories, and most notably in the Auchinleck *King of Tars*, the conversion of pagans to Christians is written on the body, whether at the moment of transformation itself, as in the latter tale, or as a more anticipatory symbol of the inherent Christianity of the pagan in the earlier narratives. Thus beauty becomes a sign of potential incorporation into the Christian or Western system, an ultimate denial of the pagan other, even if the actual conversion has yet to take place.

In the *Prise d'Orange*, readers learn quickly that paganism is a functional disguise, as William, Guielin, and Gilbert are able to get into Orange "disguised by alum and black dye, / so that they look like Saracen tyrants."¹⁵ The association of blackness and tyranny with the Saracens is called into question by the description of "the fair Lady Orable . . . the wife of Sir Tiebaut the Slav" (251–52). Although there is "no one so fair in all Christendom, / nor in pagan lands wherever you seek. / Her body is lovely, slender and soft, / and her eyes change color like a moulting falcon," the narrator asks, "what use is all her beauty / when she does not know God and his goodness?" (257–58). Orable's beauty would please any noble, only if "she could be saved if she wished to believe" (260). William's promise to give up fighting if he does not win her and the city "by Him who has all mankind to save" (263) projects the inevitability of Orable's conversion: she is beautiful and he is a noble man; she will please a noble man only if she becomes Christian; his potential pleasure thus equals her potential transformation. When the two meet, Orable is presented as an ambiguous symbol. Although the text says "[t]here sits Orable, the African Lady," suggesting her darkness (the same blackness that William and his retainers have put on to disguise themselves and gain entrance to the city and lady), the text describes her as "more white than snow in the sunlight, / she is more red than the most fragrant rose" (661, 665–66). William is instantly smitten, and he greets her with his own ambiguous address: "May that God save you, in whom we believe!" (the suggestiveness of "we," which can mean either God, in whom William believes, or Mohammed, in whom Orable ostensibly believes, is pointed here; the language implies that they do, in fact, believe in the same deity). Orable responds, "Mohammed save you, on whom the world depends" (669, 671). For all of Orable's Saracen language, William says "it is Paradise here!" (687). As Saracens cannot inhabit paradise, the romance metaphor here is suggestive of what will happen—Orable's conversion—which is reflected in her "white" beauty. Indeed, each scene in which Orable appears couples increasingly religious language with descriptions of her beauty as she gradually joins the Franks against her own people. Implored by William and Guielin "by St. Peter" to give them arms, she complies, even providing her husband's sword and shield. After significant fighting, Orable promises that she will "swiftly become a Christian," anticipating the poem's end (1377). William "frees Orable of the graceful form" after which "they have Orable take off her robes, / and baptize her to the honor of God, / divesting her of her pagan name . . . By Christian law, they call her Guiborc"; William "goes to make her his wife," thus completing the circle with which the poem opens (1866–68, 1871). Essentially, the story foretold by her beauty has taken place, as

her outward appearance has become meaningful by her conversion and incorporation into the poem's Christian society.

Orable is interesting not because as a "white Saracen," a term used valuably by Jacqueline de Weever,¹⁶ she occupies a unique place on the boundary between Saracen and Christian, but rather because she is so representative of a consistent alliance of beauty with Christianity that locates the potential for social incorporation into the Western system in the attractiveness of the female body. Her whiteness and its anticipation of her transformation, which is ultimately cemented by her change of name, is fairly standard business. Variations on the narrative, however, show a paradigmatic alliance of physical appearance and internal identity, whether as predilection and potential or as representative of a change that has already taken place. In the French *Aucassin et Nicolette*, readers (and Aucassin) accept Nicolette's inherent value because of her beauty, when she is described by Aucassin: "Nicolette is debonair: / her limbs elegant, her face, / her beauty frees my heart, / it is right that I love her, / who is so sweet."¹⁷ Her adopted father reminds us of her Christianity: "I have bought her with my coins, so have I raised her and baptised her and made her my godchild," which is again echoed by a description of her very European beauty: "she had hair of gold / and eyebrows sweetly made, / clear her oval face: / none more lovely seen."¹⁸ Aucassin's parents, however, can't get past her birth and continue to view her as a pagan and a slave: "she is a prisoner who arrived from a foreign land, the Viscount of this town bought her from the Saracens, brought her to this town, raised her and baptised her and made her his godchild, and will give her one of these days to some bachelor who will earn his bread for her with honour: you have nothing to do with it."¹⁹ The conflict between the two visions of Nicolette, pagan and Christian, vie with each other throughout the work; Nicolette's beautiful body has salutary powers in a very Christian context, as one glimpse of her bare thigh cures a pilgrim's illness:

Nicolette, lily flower,
sweet friend fair of face,
you are sweeter than the grape
or the sop soaked in the cup.
One day a pilgrim came,
he was born in Limousin,
sick with delusions he,
lying in a bed,
in the last distress,
sick with great sickness:
you passed before his bed,
lifted your dress's train,
and the ermine-bordered hem,
the white linen smock,
so as to show your limbs:
the pilgrim he was cured
sound and sane, as none before:
raised himself from his bed,
returned to his own country
sane and sound and healed.²⁰

Nicolette's white body is thus a sign of her acceptability, defined by her Christianity, which is shown to be an inherent part of her identity when she must disguise herself as a Saracen once she is returned to her own country. Escaping marriage to the pagan king, she transforms her appearance to pass as a native and a minstrel: "she took a herb and stained her head and face, so that she was all black and discoloured. And she told her to make a tunic and mantle and shirt and leggings, and took on the guise of a minstrel."²¹ Again, Nicolette's identity is played out physically; the ultimate gauge of her acceptability within the narrative context established by Aucassin's doubting parents comes because she must dress up to perform the self they believe she inhabits (even though they are dead by the time this happens); their inability to read the truth of her nobility and Christianity on her body shows their failure to understand the truth, even as the reader and Aucassin understand it. (Aucassin's problematic understanding of his own religion's doctrine is a different problem.)

Like Orable, Nicolette serves to enhance the equation of beauty and Christianity that shows real or potential conversion to be written inherently on the body, creating a functional desirability predicated on an incorporation into the text's larger value systems. Whether in an overt narrative of conquest and conversion, like the *Prise d'Orange*, or a story in which the Christian/pagan rhetoric reflects anxieties about otherness within communities, the physical self is shown to be a reliable measure of authenticity. Even the eccentric Floripas in the *Ferumbras* story shows a similar bodily rhetoric in action, despite some significant narrative differences that cast her more ambiguously in her pagan and Christian roles.

Suzanne Akbari's exploration of Floripas shows her to be problematic because the active and masculine qualities of her Saracen identity are often at odds with her beautiful feminine side; the increased dwelling on her beauty differentiates her as a proto-Christian, and her continued avowals of desire for baptism make her body increasingly available for the Christian men who desire her.²² As Akbari notes, Floripas continues in a transformational process until, like Orable, she is fully Christian and thus fully available to those who desire her: "Only with her baptism at the climax of the narrative, however, does Floripas become wholly accessible. By becoming spiritually 'clean,' dipped in the purifying waters of the baptismal font, the pagan princess at last ceases to be a potential source of pollution to the Christian knights."²³ The necessity of her baptism provides conclusion to the foreshadowing created by the beauty of her form, thus reconciling the competing impulses that Akbari explores; her actual conversion affirms the nature of the sign while controlling her otherness. Instead of the problematic pagan woman, her beauty turns out to define her as the "real Christian thing" all along; or, as Akbari notes, "like the relics of the Passion, like Jerusalem itself, Floripas is a beautiful prize which (in the ideology of crusade) is rightfully reclaimed from the dirty hands of the Saracens."²⁴ Yet within this reclamation project remains the suggestion that even if Floripas (like Orable and Nicolette) was truly Christian after all, the baser impulses connected to her pagan experience must be controlled by the act of conversion itself, wiping out the dangerous and problematic elements, the shadows of "darkness" on her white body.

For Orable, Nicolette, and Floripas, beauty and whiteness act as signs of possibility; because they look Christian, they can become (or have become, in

Nicolette's case) Christian. The Middle English *King of Tars*, however, ratchets up the connection between outward appearance and inward change, offering two "conversions" in which the body's transformation is a direct result of the act itself. The Sultan of Damascus desires the daughter of the King of Tars, a Christian. Although her father asks her if she's willing to marry a pagan, she refuses, saying "[n]ay lord, so mot y þriue. / Ihesu, mi Lord in trinite, Lat me neuer þat day yse / a tyrant forto take."²⁵ The Sultan attacks, and the lady gives in to save her people. Arriving at the Sultan's court, she discovers she must convert to the "lay" of the land, which she ostensibly does, although "al the þe lawes couþe / & seyed hem openliche wiþ her mouþe / Ihesu nouȝ she forȝt" (5050–52). When she gives birth, however, it is to a monster: "for lin ho hadde it non. / Bot as a rond of flesche yschor / in chaumber it hay hem before / Wiþouten blod & bon. / For sorwe þe lauedi wald dye / For it hadde noiþer nose no eye, / But lay ded as þe ston" (5799–805). The Sultan takes the lump-child to his temple, but his gods can't give it human form; when he brings it back to his wife, she suggests that "Ihesu Crist, þat made man" might be more successful, but exacts the promise that the Sultan "[a]lle mi godes ichil forsake, / & to Ihseu, þi Lord, me take, / as ich am gentil kniȝt" (6752, 6949–51). After finding a priest, the lady has the baby baptized. The "prest toke þe flesche anon, / and cleped it þe name of Ion" and "when þat it cristned was / it hadde liif & lim & fas, / & crid wiþ gret deray." Not only is the child no longer a lump, "fierer child kniȝt non be bore" (7702–03, 7750–52, 7801). Again, beauty becomes a sign of Christianity, readable on the child's previously lumpish flesh; not just life, but also form, become the outward symbol of the internal change wrought by the transformative experience of baptism. The poem, however, offers up a second example: pushed to his promised conversion as the result of the child's springing to life, the Sultan of Damascus accepts the law of Christ. Renamed Cleophas after the priest, at the moment of baptism "His hide, þat blac & lōply was, / al white bicom, purh Godes gras / And clere wiþouten blame" (9252–54). The Sultan joins the King of Tars, they convert the Sultan's people, and a battle against the remaining heathens ensues.

Here conversion is inscribed on the body of the lump and the Sultan even more overtly than it is on the bodies of Mary and Thaïs. As Jane Gilbert discusses, the lump-child exists as a symbol of the failure of the King to "impose sexual prohibition and patrilineal filiation, since he cannot prevent the marriage between his daughter and the Sultan."²⁶ Inadequate imposition of sexual control of the daughter leads to the production of monsters that only the assertion of Christianity can reclaim; the lady's mistake in marrying the Sultan—engaging in an act of miscegenation—can only give birth to an impotent lump because further generation from this stock would undermine all notions of superiority and value that the text assigns to the Christians of Tars. The transformation is, as Gilbert declares, "simplistic, vulgar, and racist," yet it is simultaneously "a powerful image that repels and fascinates by its very crudity," and "attempts to reduce it to a merely aesthetic or rational object fail to capture its quiddity."²⁷ Although she refers specifically to the child here, Gilbert might as well be speaking of the Sultan's conversion also. Both transformations call to mind the repetitive claim of the *Chanson de Roland*, "the pagans are wrong; the Christians right";²⁸ in their simple equation, to be pagan is to be a formless, "loathly," blob; to be Christian is to be a living, beautiful, active person.

Thus, in these medieval narratives, conversion—whether from sin to grace as in Hrotsvit's plays, or from pagan to Christian as in the romances—is clearly both an internal and external experience; Christianity, whether latent or actual, is visually readable on the body. On the face of things, the makeover show offers a more superficial version of transformation. If the medieval narratives indicate a persistent racism and fear of otherness, along with a need for authentication of the self through incorporation into a set of social values and structures that control female sexuality and stress conformity, they also offer a kind of salutary change that permits transcendence of the physical altogether. Problematic as the masculine forces that seek to control Mary's and Thaïs's sexuality may be, the two still achieve a true repentance and ascend to heaven shortly after their conversion experiences, which in a Christian society betokens value. If the internal nature of the conversions in the romances fail to be examined, the suggestion of order that they represent, since each one either ends with a marriage or the conquering of disruptive forces of paganism (or both), at least implies some kind of social harmony brought on by this internal change.

For all their potential differences, the degree to which makeover shows unconsciously ape the rhetoric of the medieval conversion narratives gives one pause. Emotional and physical suffering are often significant parts of the medieval conversion story, as both Mary and Thaïs endure extreme discomfort, humiliation and imprisonment within their anchorholds. Stacy London and Clinton Kelly insist that "you may not wear any shoe just because it is comfortable," and tout the desirability of shoes that are "excruciatingly painful and fabulous," emphasizing discomfort in the name of fashion.²⁹ However, their recommendations and insults appear mild compared to FOX's *The Swan* and ABC's *Extreme Makeover*, which dwell on the intensity of the experience of physical pain, focusing insidiously on the suffering involved both before and during the more drastic, surgical transformations they endorse. As one critic suggests, the shows' lead-in should be "[o]n next week's episode, another pitiful player goes through unbelievable pain and suffering as we guide her through a horrendous journey of self-exploration." Commenting that this type of reality show relies on "embarrassment, emotional pain, and degradation for television entertainment," the same critic asks why networks "must rely on suffering, humiliation, mortification, and disgrace to drive their newest reality shows."³⁰ Speaking of *The Swan*, which he calls "the worst show of 2004," Horiuci condemns the assumption that "it takes radical cosmetic surgery and severe psychological rebuilding to better oneself."³¹ Unlike *What Not To Wear*, which suggests that what lies between a shlub and success is merely ill-fitting clothes, comfortable shoes, and baggy sweatpants, the *Swan* and *Extreme Makeover* assume that only through far more radical alteration is beauty (and therefore true conversion) possible.

While suggesting that "each person who goes through this experience in a difficult and exciting way come[s] out the end transformed, *the Swan* also implies degrees of progress."³² Apparently, the producers of these shows believe in the maxim Pafnutius delivers to Thaïs as she enters her enclosure, "the more perfectly you humiliate yourself, the faster you will earn forgiveness" (106). All contestants are made over, but only half proceed to the beauty pageant at the season's end, and only one of those will be crowned the "Swan"—presumably the one who appears most radiant that once was foul; the one who most fully

demonstrates the indoctrination offered by the show's authorities. The doctrine put forward, of course, is a kind of Barbie femininity that, like the medieval narratives' notion of beauty and whiteness, eliminates any suggestions of variation, difference, or ethnicity. These conventions also reinforce uniform standards of sexual attractiveness and generic beauty as one finds on *What Not To Wear*. The frequent emphasis on jackets that create an hourglass figure (the aforementioned pointy-toed, high-heeled shoes and low-necked tops) offer these standards at the level of clothing. However, shows like *The Swan* take these conventions much farther; Dr. Randal D. Haworth, *The Swan*'s plastic surgeon, commented of contestant Amy Williams, an aspiring performer who felt herself held back "because I was told I had a face for radio": "She's going to need a lot of feminine sensuality invented into her face." Jaw and chin implants, a nose job, eye and lip lifts, liposuction, a tummy tuck, a breast lift, and dental work, along with some gym time, left her exclaiming "I have a waist!" and "Oh thank you, Jesus."³³ Amy's religious language only serves to cement the links to her medieval counterparts, who also see their pain and suffering as requiring some kind of transcendent gratitude. Amy has earned her reward because, like Thaïs, who also praises "Him" and "all the company of heaven . . . because He not only suffers men to live in sinful ways / but rewards the penitent with the gift of grace," she has punished herself "with such compunction" that she has "earned forgiveness' unction" (110, 109). Amy's suffering and pain were insufficient, however, for full redemption; *The Swan*'s second season pageant was won by Delisa Styles, who suffered the requisite pain and humiliation (receiving a brow, mid-face, and lower-eye lift, a fat transfer to her lips and cheek folds, photo facials to reduce sun damage, a tummy tuck, a breast lift, and liposuction on her inner thighs, as well as a divorce from a husband who served her papers on camera), and who learned her required lesson even more blatantly, noting "so much for the army girl, now I am a girly girl," accepting the imposed ideals of femininity that the show offers.³⁴

However, physical beauty and whiteness at least claim to be a semiotic representation of an internal, functional change in the medieval narratives; in the makeover shows, the outward sign seems to produce internal change. Indeed, on many shows, such as *What Not To Wear*, the victim is chosen for conversion; the will to change need not precede the actual transformation, and the statement of faith always follows the new hairdo rather than generating it. Asked to explain why they should be chosen "The Swan," the pageant contestants' responses reveal the ways that their external transformations apparently have produced internal changes: the winner, Delisa, responded: "I deserve to be crowned The Swan because during the course of this program I've learned my strength, my beauty, and my place in this world. I've learned that the only limits we have in this world are the ones we place on ourselves, and how not to do that any more. The world is a wide open place and I hope to be able to take this knowledge and use it and hopefully others can use me as a model to better their lives as well."³⁵ Although Delisa implies a causality by which her extensive surgeries and other alterations have produced her understanding of self, Erica addresses transformation more specifically: "I feel I deserve to be The Swan because I've gone through a constant transformation in my life. From Day One I've always been transforming, and when I came to this program, I used to have no confidence. I used to weigh over 240 pounds. This whole program has just brought

so much joy to my life. I realize that true inner beauty is what really matters. I've met the most incredible women here and we all have the most incredible beauty from within."³⁶ The association of thinness and spirituality echoes Caroline Walker Bynum's contention that for religious women, the renunciation of food "was at the core of religious world-denial" and "renunciation of ordinary food prepared the way for consuming Christ in Eucharist and in mystical union."³⁷ Food asceticism implies, for medieval women, a kind of mystical devotion that became a way of "controlling as well as renouncing both self and environment . . . in directing their being toward the food that is Christ, women moved to God . . . by abandoning their flawed physicality."³⁸ If for the medieval religious women Bynum considers, this renunciation was a pathway out of the world, for modern subjects like Erika, renunciation of the "flawed physicality" only leads to its replacement with a different physicality, one that gains approval both through its absence of flesh and presence of stereotypes of beauty and thinness, another echo of the whiteness that characterizes Orable and Floripas as much as the self-starvation required by Thaïs in her anchorhold.

Ultimately, however, it is the external change's function to produce some kind of internal change. Gina noted further how her outward transformation has altered her sense of herself:

Before coming to *the Swan* program I had completely given up on myself. I focused all my attention on others. This program has given me a true sense of self-respect, and taught me that I deserve to put time and energy into becoming the best woman that I can be, both inside and out. For the first time in my life I am truly confident, and I believe I can accomplish anything. I would be honored to represent this program so that I can help and inspire all other women to embrace that swan deep inside within them. And to spread their wings and fly.³⁹

The ripeness of style merely exaggerates the conversion language its content reflects.

The larger question for the modern narratives may be whether the kinds of conversion they suggest are actually possible. As Richard Cohen notes, "no doubt the people transformed will be changed in some way, but not the way they want—or the one that really matters. They seek happiness, whatever that is, and are certain that it has been deprived them on account of their looks."⁴⁰ Noting that while the contestants are probably correct in this assumption, that they are too late to make substantial change, Cohen also observes that these people "have had only their appearance changed. But the surgeon's scalpel only cuts skin deep. It cannot transform the cores of the individual, which are already shaped." Calling into question the concept of "closure," which Cohen calls "an American Myth," he challenges the possibility that one such event can really bring on change, since the belief that "the door can be shut on the past" is inherently false, as "the past is always present in the present."⁴¹ Because TV works on narrative models—in this case, the narrative of conversion—it enforces narrative assumptions that cannot work in real life. Thaïs and Mary die at the ends of their plays, ascending into heaven, and with the close of the narratives that give life to them, Orable/Guiborc, Nicolette, Floripas, The Sultan of Damascus, and even the lump-child do as well. With no writing

beyond the endings, the promises of redemption and incorporation inherent in the act of conversion are never challenged by any kind of real-life practice. Unlike the medieval characters, reality makeover subjects "are what [they] have been";⁴² the past cannot be dispatched as easily as Orable's paganism or Thais's sin. As a reflection of internal change, beauty in the medieval narratives can provide an effective semiotic representation of conversion; as the ostensible cause of that internal change, it is doomed to fail.

If the *King of Tars* is "simplistic, vulgar, and racist," reality TV has been called "fast, cheap, and totally addictive . . . the shows are weapons of mass distraction . . . causing us to become dumber, fatter, and more disengaged from ourselves and society."⁴³ Encouraging voyeurism, reality TV focuses on "moral weaknesses, body flaws, and intimate betrayals"; concerned primarily with "institutional humiliation," it offers up a rhetoric in which the victim is made "passive and conscious of the humiliating act" while viewers derive satisfaction from this disempowerment.⁴⁴ Humiliation as entertainment commodity is not as new a thing as reality TV's critics imply; whether its perpetrators are Stacy London and Clinton Kelly or Pafnutius and Abraham, the encouragement to dwell on the faults of our "characters" by an authority figure in charge of the potential transformation is an essential part of the rhetorics of conversion that both the medieval and contemporary models imply. Myra Mendible notes that many reality shows "reinforce a systematic humiliation of women. This attitude is especially troubling, as it suggests a kind of entrenched thinking that condones humiliation under certain conditions and for certain 'kinds' of people."⁴⁵ The focus on women, Mendible notes, parallels the experience of Hrotsvit's and the romances' primary actors, while the second half of her sentence strongly echoes Gilbert's reading of the *King of Tars*; in both the medieval and modern examples, social "others" are available for humiliation to prove the power of those who enforce social standards while simultaneously reinforcing social values in audience members who are forced to align themselves with those values in order to avoid their own humiliation. By providing the opportunity to say, "Wow, these people are really messed up! I'm saner than this,"⁴⁶ reality TV insists on an association between its viewers and the structures it enforces.

The problems with these narratives, medieval and modern, are obvious. If in the medieval versions anxieties about unrepressed sexuality, often couched in the terms of religious difference, or even that religious difference itself, produced the need for these conversion stories to control these impulses, in the contemporary makeover versions, that anxiety about difference and a prevailing need for social control now penetrates not only the home but also the skin. The dominant ideologies upheld by medieval conversion narratives—Christianity, whiteness, control of sexuality and desire—and those of makeover shows are invested in the same problematic rhetoric and the ways in which they seem to escape or challenge it through a different semiotic of representation by which the external change is representative of an internal transformation rather than being its cause. Thus, both narratives of transformation, medieval and modern, ultimately present anxieties inherent in societies that attempt a combination of exclusion and incorporation. If little has changed since the Middle Ages, these new conversion narratives thus offer a frightening version of the "melting pot."

Notes

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35. *The Swan*, "The Pageant," FOX Broadcasting, Original Airdate: 22 December 2004.
36. *The Swan*, "The Pageant," FOX Broadcasting.
37. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Significance of Food to Religious Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 3.
38. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 5. Bynum takes this discussion further to show women's religious abandonment of real food as a method of becoming the suffering body on the cross, "the food on the altar" (p. 5). Renunciation for these pageant contestants seems to have a somewhat less elevated meaning.
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CHAPTER 3

OUTWIT, OUTPLAY, OUTLAST: MORAL LESSONS FROM *HANDLYNG SYNNE* AND *SURVIVOR*

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In both medieval European and contemporary American society, popular culture crafts reality-fictions that address questions at the heart of the cultural self. This essay investigates how both a medieval penitential manual and a contemporary reality TV show ask their respective audiences to work through certain essential conflicts that inevitably arise in the social struggles occasioned by the not always compatible objectives of self-interest, communal moral values, and capitalism.

Judges 11 recounts the story of Jephthah the Gideonite, whose father was the powerful, mighty leader Gilead, and whose mother was a harlot. Jephthah is cast out by Gilead's wife and legitimate sons who do not want a bastard heir in the house. He flees to Tob where he gathers a clan of desperate men and becomes a marauder. When the tribes of Ammon make war against Israel his skills as an outlaw are in demand; the elders of Gilead send messengers to Jephthah to recruit him as a captain to fight against the Ammonites. Jephthah, seeing their distress as an opportunity to improve his fortunes, drives a good bargain to gain social status and public recognition as the captain of the troops in exchange for leading the attack against their enemies. Before the battle, Jephthah makes an oath to God that in exchange for victory over his enemies and a safe return, he will sacrifice as an offering to God the first person (or thing) that emerges from his home to greet him. When he returns home, his daughter runs out to meet him, singing and dancing to celebrate his success in battle. For Jephthah it is a sad day; she is his only child but he is bound by his oath.

The theme of the story is a familiar one. Jephthah makes a vow to sacrifice something in return for personal ambition. He is deeply concerned with his personal honor and social status—so much so that he does not recognize the self-destructive danger that ambition holds. We have heard stories like this all our lives—spectacular and likely apocryphal tales created from our deepest fears, designed to instruct us, to keep us in check. We may suspect that they are fiction,

but we never doubt the truth at their core. Regardless of whether they are Bible stories, parables, fables, or urban myths, these narratives act as catecheses—educating children, young people, and adults in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into acceptable individual and social behaviors.

In both medieval European and contemporary American society, popular culture crafts fictions that address questions at the heart of the cultural self. This self, constructed from our affiliations with various groups—structured around religion, ethnicity, gender, class, race—makes meaning for us as we take action in the world. It is that self which simultaneously connects to the larger social group and disconnects itself in its search for individuality. This essay attempts to compare how two seemingly disparate cultural productions—Robert Mannyng's 1303 groundbreaking penitential manual *Handlyng Synne* and the mother of all reality shows, *Survivor*—explore the tensions between the individual and the group, played out in a battle over money.

The European twelfth century, often called the Medieval Renaissance, has been credited with the birth of the individual as well as the birth of capitalism. To the question, “Did the twelfth century discover the individual?” leading medieval scholars, such as Colin Morris, Norman Cantor, and R.W. Southern, all answer “yes.” One of the central motivating forces of the twelfth-century Renaissance was a new desire on the part of literate men and women to understand themselves as single, unique persons—what we would call “individuals.”¹ The roots of this development are both secular and religious. Robert Hanning locates a nascent concept of selfhood in the adventures of chivalric romance, which gains its power from “transforming the awareness of an inner self into an actuality which impresses upon the external world the fact of personal, self-chosen destiny, and therefore of an inner-determined identity.”² In addition, the Catholic church's growing emphasis on confession and introspection promoted self-identity and individualism.³ The individual means not only an inner person, it also means a particular self-in-the-world that is unlike any other self.

In her study of late medieval spirituality, *Jesus as Mother*, Caroline Walker Bynum has cautioned, however, that “the often discussed discovery of the individual should be seen in the context of another equally new and important twelfth-century interest: a self-conscious interest in the process of belonging to groups and filling roles.”⁴ If the religious writing of the twelfth century was characterized by a new concern for the inner person, it is because of a new concern for the group, for types and examples, for the outer person. Russian theorist Aaron Gurevich, a pioneer in historical anthropology, identifies this connection between the singular person and the group (or the microcosm and the macrocosm) and argues that in the Middle Ages, the microcosmic individual is not simply a small part of the whole, but a miniature replica of the entirety: “The effort to grasp the world as a single, unified whole runs through all the medieval *summae*; everything was seen thus, from God, the Bible, and the liturgy downwards.”⁵ Thus, the twelfth-century individual did not find himself by casting off social restraints but by adopting appropriate communal patterns. Explicit didactic texts teach the importance of seeing the self in terms of the group, by

illustrating the impact of one person's example on another. People are shaped by the adoption of patterns that alter the outer as well as the inner person.⁶

David Aers reminds us that the continuation of the human species is inextricably linked with the existence of particular communities, and thus self-interest has always been bound up in communal interest, "a fact as axiomatic to Aristotle as to Thomas Aquinas. Human beings are born into communities they did not choose and they grow into given social identities with which they encounter their specific circumstances."⁷ The twelfth-century self, with its emphasis on holding onto well-worn models of habit and custom, is not the same as our twenty-first-century concept of an autonomous individuality that often clashes with conformity.⁸ We find ourselves in a modern predicament in which the individual quarrels with mass culture, while at the same time the individual can be co-opted and taken over by that same mass culture. Many have also argued that a certain intense individualism has led to an equally intense estrangement from society. Social theorists, such as Max Weber, have argued that ours is a culture in which alienation and other-directedness threaten our individual autonomy, producing an inverted kind of micro/macrocism in which a sense of isolation and of separation from society and the world builds on the sense of a vast world within.⁹

Closely aligned with the rise of the individual in twelfth-century Europe is the development of the new profit economy. Again, both secular and religious contexts made this possible. The personal agreement between feudal lord and vassal was replaced by money payment, leading to the development of banking in the relatively democratic city-states of northern Italy, whose political institutions promoted the new individual.¹⁰ Religious institutions also financed economic growth. John Gilchrist locates the first examples of capitalism in the great Christian monastic estates where the concept of the mortgage evolved. By 1100 the traditional market was rapidly realigning to focus on capitalist-based production as the driving force of the European economy. These rapid increases in manufacture and trade, which peaked around 1300, impacted virtually every institution, social group, geographical area, and nexus of ideas in Latin Christendom.¹¹

The encroachment of individualism and capitalism on normative medieval thinking resulted in moral confusion and a kind of social separation anxiety. As the economy remained relatively unchanged in the first 1,000 years of the church's history, canonical thought on economic matters did not need to change. But a sense of "disconnect" between the observed world and the obsolete teachings of the church called for a language to deal with the new economy in which widely circulating money made cash available to more and more average individuals. The church was forced to examine and modify its teaching on economic matters, gradually accommodating the cash economy.¹² In *Your Money or Your Life*, Jacques Le Goff offers an interesting study of usury as an example of this kind of adaptation. The medieval church, which had long condemned the lending of money for interest, inevitably had to respond to the new structure of economic life that included financial loans. Thus, the church refashioned its theology in order to condemn the usurer, not to hell, but merely to purgatory.¹³

Of course, the language of spiritual and economic well-being has always been commingled in Christian texts. "The Parable of the Talents" (Matt. 25:14–30)

recounts the story of the master who gives money to three slaves. One spends his money, one buries his, and the third invests his for a hundred percent return. It is this third servant whom the master praises because the Christian life should produce “profit.” Patristic tradition interprets this parable in a number of ways: as an apocalyptic teaching, as an obligation to “gloss” texts, and as a call to witnessing. The *Glossa Ordinaria* is a ninth-century compilation of interpretations of the Bible that was quoted as an authority by St. Thomas Aquinas and others well into the seventeenth century. It annotates the parable by saying “duplicating talents is preaching the word”—that is, the wealth of God, His capital, should be productively employed.¹⁴ This correlation between sound financial practice and right living also appears in the morality play *Everyman* (ca. 1485) in which Death refers to his “reckoning” or account book and insists Everyman must tell God “how thou hast *spent* thy life and in what wise.”¹⁵ God’s “reckoning book” vividly spotlights the medieval invention of double entry bookkeeping.¹⁶ Based on keeping a balance, it made it hard for the outsider, or sinner, to find the profit, or salvation, without a knowledgeable interpreter.

Concerning the Five Talents, a sermon preached in both Latin and German by the Franciscan Berthold of Regensburg (ca. 1250–75), explains that the talents are gifts of God. The first gift is our individual self, our “person,” and the second is our “vocation,” what he calls the social function of the individual. Thus, the person, as understood by Berthold, was a socially determined individual, “bound up extremely closely with memberships.” He therefore glosses the parable as teaching the place of the individual in relationship to society and in relation to generating material prosperity.¹⁷ Generating wealth was, of course, not always a theoretical construct, and accumulating wealth became one of the well-known abuses of the late Middle Ages. A balanced account of the time must also acknowledge the forces countering this materialist version of Christianity, such as the Franciscans and other mendicant groups who saw attachment to possessions as a great moral danger to Christianity.¹⁸

Today, we still use the language of wealth in connection with our spiritual condition when we “pay” for our sins, and a vexed intersection of morality and wealth looms large in the United States. But where the Christian Middle Ages saw accommodation with the moneyed economy as a necessary evil, placing credit card companies into Purgatory rather than Hell, today it is accepted as a given by many Christian conservatives and fundamentalists that Christianity and free-market capitalism are theologically joined. In order to justify Christian wealth, modern apologists have claimed that elements within Christianity actually gave rise to reason, the individual, and thus capitalism. Further, “good Christians” are rewarded with wealth. If Christianity is the mother of the profit economy, then surely it must be good. Max Weber’s influential *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* advanced what has come to be known as the Weber-Tawney Thesis, which argues that Protestantism parented entrepreneurship and capitalism.¹⁹

Some conservative thinkers have launched an analysis that takes capitalism even further back to the beginnings of Christianity. Christianity created capitalism, according to Rodney Stark, a social science professor at Baylor University, because “Christianity alone embraced reason and logic as the primary guides to religious truth.”²⁰ Conservative Christian theories about the links between

morality and money lead to popularizations such as this one by Pat Robertson, founder and chairman of The Christian Broadcasting Network: "In God's order there are no schemes of wealth distribution which under the government forces productive citizens to give the fruit of their labors to those who are nonproductive."²¹ According to this theology, wealth has no stigma and generates no moral anxieties. On the other hand, of course, there are those who advocate multiple forms of Christian charity while battling what they see as the capitalist imperialist culture and its power. The World Council of Churches, for example, advocates the position that "contemporary threats to the earth and the human family arise in large measure from the acceptance by many people of consumerism and economic globalization."²² The conflict in these two stances illustrates the tensions over wealth in our own culture. Weber proclaimed that "money is the most abstract and impersonal element that exists in personal life,"²³ and as such, it is at the heart of cultural debates about the personal, the public, morality, and material success. In the discussion that follows, we explore how two cultural texts, *Handlyng Synne* and *Survivor*, illustrate these issues.

Handlyng Synne is the first English work in what was to become a very popular genre—handbooks to guide priests and lay people in giving full confession.²⁴ As the name connotes, the *handbook* is designed to help the person using it as he grapples with the problems of and solutions to human sin. Like its popular cousin, *Survivor*, which arrives 700 years later, it aims to entertain while teaching important cultural values. Called the "most skillful storyteller of his time,"²⁵ Robert Mannyng of Brunne translated William of Wadington's Norman French *Manuel des Pechiez* (*Handbook of Sins*) into Middle English couplets in 1303. Mannyng significantly refines the penitential tradition through, for example, systematized theology, narrative *exempla*, and the vernacular. He also heavily emphasizes daily practicality, because he never loses sight of the ultimate reason for his work—the organic union of recognizing sin, making confession, and self-correction. The structure of *Handlyng Synne* reflects the systematic innovations of early moralists and monastic disciplinarians interested in the enumeration and classification of sins, the sacraments, and other precepts of the church. In over 12,000 lines, Mannyng provides a prologue and a commentary with tales on the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins, sacrilege, the seven sacraments, the twelve points of shrift, and the eight joys of grace. Mannyng's use of tales, all of which he claims are true, differs from other Middle English works, such as *Lay Folks Catechism* (1357), which typically have no illustrative tales. The only other early source for a reasonably large number of moralized tales written in vernacular languages is sermon collections of the day.²⁶ It is an innovation, then, to combine the *exemplum* tradition found only in sermons with the secular practice of closely framed tales to confirm and explain morality.

Handlyng Synne is best understood in the context that fostered it. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council began the process of reforming Christian practice. Constitution 21, *Omnis utriusque sexus*, decreed that each and every one of the faithful, on pain of minor excommunication, should confess privately to his or her own priest at least once a year.²⁷ The passage of Constitution 6, which required

bishops to convene yearly synods at which they had to publish all canons, assured the promulgation of the Lateran directives.²⁸ This in turn spurred the production of pragmatic manuals to guide the often poorly educated local priest in hearing confession and giving penance. *Poenitentiale*, by the Parisian master of theology Thomas of Chobham (ca. 1160–?1233), emphasizes the practical aspects of penance: “We shall pass over the subtle theoretical questions concerning penance and instead pursue with great diligence what practical knowledge and behavior is necessary.”²⁹ Rather than arguing the moral points of prostitution, for example, he argues instead that a prostitute earns her pay through her work and is entitled to keep her wages.³⁰

Survivor is one of the principal examples of its genre, “reality television.” These programs—*Big Brother*, *Cops*, *Real World*, and the like—have participants who are not actors, employ minimal scripting, and provide drama or narrative created primarily through structure and editing. Each has tightly constructed episodes that build suspense, provide viewers with necessary clues and insights, and dramatically present winners and losers. Although they are produced to feel as if they represent real events as they occur, they clearly are not. All rely on a sense of “real” voyeurism.³¹ In *Survivor*, sixteen “castaways” are dropped off on an isolated island or rugged interior where they must find shelter and food. Divided into two “tribes,” they compete every few days in physical and mental challenges. One challenge is for material reward and the other is for “immunity” from being voted “off the island.” (The conclusion of each episode is a Tribal Council meeting, during which the losing tribe must decide, by secret ballot, which one of its own members will be sent packing.) After the tribes have shrunk in size, they merge and the game moves to individual competition. When it comes down to the final two survivors, contestants who were previously voted off return to form the Tribal Council jury and choose the final winner, who will get a million dollars.

The very name of the show, *Survivor*, connotes the ambiguity of what is actually being tested. Survival of the fittest is clearly the subtext here, but most fit at what? The show juxtaposes real survivor skills—in hunting, fishing, working—with social survivor skills—in diplomacy, collaboration, communication, etc. In the end, the social game playing supersedes the work ethic or pretty much any other factor when it comes to staying in the game. The eighth program in the series, *Survivor: All Stars*, set in the Pearl Islands, presents a unique opportunity for analysis since the participants were chosen based on their strong personalities, their already-established audience appeal, and their performances on previous installments. Therefore, rather than having to discover hidden agendas or subversive personalities as is often the case, in *All-Stars*, audiences (as well as the contestants themselves) knew what to expect from each participant and had judgments already in place. A large part of the appeal of *All-Stars* played on expectations of the personal and social interactions between the assorted personalities. This, of course, creates tension for the participants who have to choose to accept and foster the “self” that was constructed on previous shows or attempt to create a new persona. *All-Stars* also varied from previous versions in that instead of two teams of eight contestants, the series divided the eighteen contestants into three tribes, providing a more complex social framework.³²

Reality TV is a reasonably new genre, but it has its roots in some of TV’s most enduring types of shows: the game show, the confessional talk show, and the

soap opera. Since networks first began broadcasting, audiences have been programmed to encourage or to condemn people much like themselves attempting to make it rich, discussing controversial topics, or resolving personal crises. From *Beat the Clock* to *Divorce Court* to *Jerry Springer*, audiences have come to expect the “real” people they are watching to use their wits and/or spill their innermost secrets in an attempt to get what they want—or perhaps sometimes get what they deserve. Long before *Oprah* or *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* granted wishes to people in need, shows such as *Queen for a Day* required audiences to be judge and jury for “contestants” whose only ability was incredible misfortune. At the end of each show, the woman whose sad story registered highest on the audience applause meter became “queen for a day” and was rewarded with a crown and scepter along with a washer and a year’s supply of detergent.

But what do these disparate works, a medieval penitential manual and a contemporary reality show, really have in common? Both texts claim to present “real-life” narratives that encourage the audience to identify and internalize cultural “truths” (or axioms) that are conveyed through a number of artificial devices in contrived environments. Both rely on claims of truthfulness to counter skepticism, include archetypal personalities and multiple narrative layers, and finally, they both structure particular confessional modes.

For Mannyng, establishing the truthfulness of the narrative examples in his work was necessary because of considerable official prejudice against fiction in the Middle Ages. The entire concept of “fiction,” that is, something inherently not true and fabricated from scratch, was tainted. Acceptable didacticism could only come from real experience, and although Jesus’s use of parables caused a complication in this paradigm, his stories were, after all, divine. Western medieval didactic writers in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, who nevertheless acknowledged the power of narrative, reconciled their use of fiction by insistence on its truth value. Historically conflicting attitudes toward the use of narratives for Christian teaching help to explain their scanty showing in early Middle English texts. The first Christian apologues were Jesus’s: more than fifty parables spread through all four gospels. In the earliest Christian writings, *exempla* always have their supporters, such as Saint Gregory, who states in the introduction to his *Dialogues* that narratives are principally intended to lead men to better lives; for this purpose, *exempla* are, in his opinion, often more efficacious than ordinary exposition of Scripture.³³ The Venerable Bede, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, tells of the missionary priest who converts nearly all of Anglia using narratives and *exempla* in his sermons.³⁴ The version of this story in *Alphabet of Tales* stresses that when dry preaching failed, colorful tales succeeded: “Seynt Bede tellis in *Gestis Anglorum* how, when Englonde was oute of belefe, the pope sent into it to preche a bishop that was a passing sutell clerk, and a well-lettered: and he usid so mekull soteltie and strange saying in his sermons, that his preshyng showd litle profettid or noght. And than there was send a noder that was les of connyng of literature than he was, and he usid talis and gude exsample in his sermons; and he within a while conuertyd nere-hand all Englonde.”³⁵

Despite traditional learned support for the *exempla*, considerable criticism was also leveled against them. Thorlac Turville-Petre makes the important point that Mannyng’s monastic order, the Gilbertines, discouraged writing in general

and required that any literary work undertaken by its adherents be authorized by the prior and should strictly avoid stylistic pretensions of any sort.³⁶ Within the great power of the story to titillate readers and evoke emotional responses lay the very present danger of leading those listeners astray. *Cursor Mundi*, an English text contemporary with *Handlyng Synne*, warns that details used to interest audiences, “the thynges that tham likes best,” actually teach and foster sins.³⁷ During the later fourteenth century, when the use of *exempla* became even more popular, criticism increased. William Langland’s *Piers Plowman*, composed more than eighty years after Mannyng, still carries on the debate: “Lothe were lewed men but thei your lore folwede / And amenden hem that thei mysdoon, more for youre ensamples / than for to prechen and preven it noght—yprocrisie it semeth” (14:114–17).³⁸ Even Chaucer’s Parson remarks, “Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me.”³⁹ Mannyng’s seemingly fictional didactic narratives are always tagged with authoritative citations: “Talys shalt thou fynde ther ynn / And chauncys that haue happyd for synne. Merueyls, some as y fond wretyn, / And outhur that haue be sye and wtyn, / None be ther ynn more ne less / But that y fond wrete or hadde wytnesse.”⁴⁰ For those stories that are unique to Mannyng, he offers personal verification: “Y shal yow telle what me was told / Of a prest that sagh and fond / Thys chaunce yn the holy lond” (1252–54) and “Y shal yow telle of a kas / That fyl now late yn kesteuene, / But the name y wyl nat neuene [give]” (6370–80). Like today’s urban myths and legends, the medieval teacher tells stories that happened to someone who knew someone. One fact remains consistent through time: aside from theological discussions of fiction, medieval audiences, just like audiences today, enjoyed (and found edifying) stories of people supposedly just like them.

Television easily blends the worlds of the imaginary and the real because of its small scale and the intimacy created between audience and performer. Television performers become members of an extended family as they visit weekly, daily, and now continually, at any time, on cable and through TiVo. Audiences of the 1950s celebrated the real birth of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez’s second child on the same day “little Ricky” was born to Lucy and Desi Ricardo on *I Love Lucy*. The identification between the two children was so strong that many people assumed that the actor (Keith Thibodeaux) who played their son was, in fact, Desi Arnez, Jr. Soap opera stars often speak of being adored or ridiculed in public for acts committed by the characters they play. However, it was not until 1992 when MTV planted cameras in a New York loft apartment that the reality genre in America truly took flight. With the *Real World* series (partly derived from Britain’s *Big Brother* series), viewers were given a documentary look and a soap opera feel as a group of Gen-Xers attempted to make a home together. The ongoing storyline focused on how each individual participant went about his or her daily routine while interacting with a collective of strangers. Audiences seemed to readily accept the concept: average people in unscripted situations exhibiting both ordinary (even boring) and outrageous behavior (indeed, participants on *Real World* are deliberately chosen to fit certain extreme personality types that will inevitably clash). Suddenly TV drama did not have to be written or acted to be entertaining or enlightening; as commentators often noted about the show—truth is stranger than fiction or, in other words, *you just can’t make this kind of stuff up*.

Today, American reality shows draw their popularity from the same premise that “true-fictions,” or what Hal Foster calls “objectively super-realistic” narratives, are authentic and somehow more genuine reflections of life than conventional fiction.⁴¹ The seemingly self-contradictory tension in the notion of the “illusion of reality” recurs at several levels on *Survivor*. On the level of content, it is expressed in the juxtaposition of the back-to-basics “survivalist” premise and the cast members’ self-conscious awareness that they are participating in a major media spectacle, with camera crews close at hand. At the level of production, this juxtaposition is highlighted by the contrast between the vermin-infested, rain-flooded hovels of the contestants and the elaborate meal tents and high-tech audio and video gear of the production crew. As Mark Andrejevic comments, “Making reality seem real, it turns out, requires the very latest in high tech audio and video equipment.”⁴² The high-budget production process perfectly summarizes the paradox of “manipulated authenticity”;⁴³ the production crew never appears in the version of the show edited for broadcast but remains behind the scenes, allowing viewers to adopt the position of the voyeur catching the action in all its “immediate” authenticity.⁴⁴ Recently, the curtain has been drawn back on reality TV programs as creative personnel (including writers, story editors, and segment producers) for reality series have sued networks and production companies, arguing that they deserve to be covered by the Writers Guild of America. These writers and story editors don’t claim to script dialogue or invent characters, but they do claim to “create dialogue,” stage situations, and shape the drama.⁴⁵ But the ultimate appeal of watching reality TV, of course, is that it supposedly reveals something more genuine than other kinds of shows. Mark Burnett, *Survivor*’s creator and executive producer, boasts that the show reveals real selves and reproduces the real world.⁴⁶

Both *Handlyng Synne* and *Survivor* use their crafted versions of reality to teach, and they achieve this end by judicious editing of their source materials to create verisimilitude and to heighten didacticism. Mannyng tells readers that his source is the *Manuel de pechiez*, but while he follows its general plan and adopts most of its sixty-seven tales, he also radically changes it—he adds twelve of his own *exempla* about contemporary and local events; he inserts popular, regional details; and he substantially changes the expository text by inserting extensive social commentary. His additional sources include authorities on pagans such as Seneca, Saint Paul (who “knew goddess privities,” 33), and a monk from his own abbey. Since *Survivor* is edited from hundreds of hours of tape rather than presented in streaming real time, the lessons here are also organized in order to enhance the agendas of the producers. Countless hours of taping are edited to a crisp, guided, forty-five-minute episode. For example, tribal councils that reportedly take one-and-a-half to two hours and often include loud outbursts from the jury occupy only ten minutes per show, and the jury is silent throughout, expressionless except for knowing glances. Some contestants from *All-Stars*, such as Lex, acknowledge that the artificiality of it all is a kind of hyper-reality and that the “game is a truth serum about what kind of person each is.”⁴⁷ But other contestants, such as Jerri, complain that the show destroys real persons because “our pain is entertainment.”⁴⁸ And when she says, “*Survivor* is about judging,” Jeff Probst essentially agrees: “you become who the audience thinks you are because they don’t really get to know the real you.”⁴⁹

Both *Handlyng Synne* and *Survivor* also have in common their focus on confession. Through these confessions, individuals situate themselves in relation to the needs of the community and their own financial desires. From the first appearances of medieval penitentials in sixth-century Britain to their golden age in the thirteenth century, they pursue a consistent goal: to bring the penitent to full confession. Earlier manuals merely guide the confessor as he questions the penitent and assigns appropriate punishment. But soon penitentials evolved into tools for the priest to educate penitents, who were then able to make the kind of fuller, informed confessions that are only possible from an individual awareness of deep interiority. One of the central concerns of a penitential text is to guide confessants to recognize the criteria of religious judgment that applies to them and to understand themselves, in Michel Foucault's terms, as "juridical subjects"—that is, to have knowledge that compels one to internalize a set of external judgmental criteria that insist on specific actions.⁵⁰ Toward this end, *exempla* provide models to supply a narrative of the self.

Medieval confession was not only constitutive of the private subject; it was also a public event. Not until the counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century were private confessionals built. Woodcuts show "private" confession in public spaces, with a pastor in a chair hearing a kneeling man's confession while others waiting to confess stand in line.⁵¹ Anthony Low argues that three kinds of representative figures—priest, penitent, and community—are involved in the process of confession. The public function of confession is "to insure discipline, to exercise control" and to reconcile "the self with those social norms that the penitent has internalized."⁵² It provides social control, externally and internally, through public sanctions and psychological manipulation.⁵³ The other outcomes that keep the penitent in check are alienation, expulsion, and exile. Therefore, while the individual is aligning his personal sense of self with his internalized sense of God's laws, he is simultaneously participating in the public function of confession, which reconciles him to those social norms that he has also internalized. When scholastic theologians debated the relative efficacy of outward rite and inward contrition, they concluded that essentially both were needed.

As Mark Miller argues, handbooks "have a great deal to tell us about the processes by which persons in the late Middle Ages came to conceive and experience themselves as ethical subjects"; Mannyng's exposition and tales certainly teach the essential acts of self-examination necessary for confession, and his insightful probing of the confessant's interiority, his "engaging the territory of agency," in Miller's words, shows us his belief in the individual.⁵⁴ In addition, Mannyng acknowledges the interpretive individuality of his readers with the complexity of his tales, which force readers to "situate the moral in their own lives."⁵⁵ The duty of judgment is placed on the audience. Mannyng will even momentarily entertain the opposing worldview held by the unofficial culture so that his reader can dialogue with it and reach the doctrinal purity being taught.⁵⁶

Though *Handlyng Synne* addresses the complexity of the individual's confession, Mannyng never neglects the social consequences of sin. Since most sins have an impact on the sinner's society, on neighbors as well as on the individual, confession must cure the self as well as the community. In the tales, sin breaks the bonds of families and communities, and sins that violate the communal good are more harshly judged than those of a more private nature. Thus, fornication is less

harmful than adultery, since adultery touches upon family bonds. Community confession has a double effect—both to repair social breaches by reconciliation with the group and to cleanse individual sins by renovation of the soul. In *Handlyng Synne*, confession is modeled by characters within the *exempla* who report on the wages of sin and the benefits of goodness. They confess in a variety of situations, some private but most overwhelmingly public. As a model of how to decode life's lessons, Mannyng offers a number of stories in which a viewer learns to "read" *exempla* to find the moral lesson. We expect saintly people to be good readers of signs, as in the tale "Parish Priest Who Reads Faces," where God grants a priest the gift to see sin. A good hermit in "Man in the Devil's Leash" sees a man released from the devil's chain after confession. But interestingly, sinners also have their own chances to see and learn. In "Coenred's Sargeant" the king urges his evil steward to repent on his deathbed, but the steward refuses even when he has two visions, one of angels showing him the small book of his good deeds and one of the tormenting devils showing him the huge book of his sins. This is an *exemplum* of failed reading, which contrasts the Jew in "Eavesdropping Jew" who wisely reads moral lessons correctly and converts.

Foucault acknowledges the part of medieval religion in the development of the sense of self: "Christianity is a confessional religion," he states, in which "each person has the duty to know . . . what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires; and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community and hence to bear public or private witness against oneself."⁵⁷ Since our Western, Judeo-Christian culture prizes self-examination, it is not surprising, then, that the segments in which the players of *Survivor* expose their inner thoughts and strategies are called "confessions." These taped cameos, in which the individual "cast-away" speaks directly to the camera, have both private and public aspects. They are private, in the sense that their own "tribes" cannot hear them, and public, in that the viewers do. These confessions offer an outlet for the players to express their vexed feelings on social relationships, communalities, and individual states of mind. In *Handlyng Synne* the *exempla* are models for each individual's own confession, which should isolate, objectify, and theoretically lead toward the eradication of sin for the reader. In the same way, each week's carefully edited episodes on *Survivor* operate as moral illustrations, encouraging viewers to assess the repercussions of their own actions within any given communal relation. According to cultural critic Jan Jagodozinki, the episodes "become a way to vent anger and hatred against those who are held up to be the evil perpetrators of society, those who are immoral in their behavior and criminal in their intent, in order that we, their audience and moral judges, can deny and disavow these same tendencies within ourselves. That is to say, they allow us to confirm that we really are not racists, homophobes, or sexists as long as the distance between them and us is preserved."⁵⁸ *Survivor* provides a type of spectator arena within which we can exercise our moral judgment.

National Public Radio commentator Adam Sternberg, in a piece that aired on *This American Life*, argues that both the appeal and the value of reality shows lie precisely in the fact that they do make us cringe. A cringe, he explains, "combines repugnance with identification."⁵⁹ We identify with the person experiencing shame or humiliation, for instance, and that identification signals a real

emotional connection. Encouraged by the false intimacy that the domestically situated TV set creates, we symbolically construct our own identities—both as individuals and members of our culture—through watching a select few compete.⁶⁰ The *Survivor* confessions mainly focus on the rumination of strategies to win the million dollars, a significant difference from Mannyng's characters trying to extricate themselves from sin. But the intended didactic impact on the audiences is the same: to encourage individuals to use their interpretive powers to discern the moral ramifications of the individual's intentions and actions.

Identifying and responding to ethical problems is the primary structural frame of both of these cultural texts. In *Handlyng Synne*, the aim of the penitential manual, to elicit full confession and contrition from the audience, informs the entire text. But it is also arranged like a set of Russian dolls, with many embedded layers that provide the opportunity for numerous interplays of the various morals. Each of the subdivisions, such as the Ten Commandments or the Seven Deadly Sins, adds another level of moralizing frame. For each exemplary tale supporting the subdivisions, Mannyng then offers both introductory and closing moralizations. In addition, the stories themselves often contain moralized pronouncements by characters within the story. The tale of "The Adulteress's Tomb," an *exemplum* on the sixth commandment against adultery, illustrates such layering. On a forsaken island, a dragon slays men and women and does "overall shame ynough" (1750). When a good hermit is asked to intervene, he weeps, prays, fasts, and preaches confession. As an answer to his three days of prayer, God sends an angel who gathers all the people and leads them to a grave. Inside is a woman's body, with the dragon sitting between the two split halves of the corpse. First, the angel explicates the meaning of this somatic sign: the corpse is broken to signify the parting of her lecherous body from her married body. The angel then delivers a sermon on matrimony. The penitential frame of *Handlyng Synne*, the need to identify, confess, and eradicate sin, controls the overall meaning of the tale. The framing provided by the commandment against adultery nuances the interpretation of the tale, by teaching that women will be punished for betraying marriage vows. Embedded in the tale, the hermit's prayer and the angel's sermon offer two other complementary morals: the need for confession and the physical retribution for unconfessed sin. The tale ends with Mannyng explaining the importance of women's loyalty in wedlock. At the same time, details of the story teach a number of related truths: all members of the community must come to confession for one person's sin; prayer makes things happen; God punishes the living and the dead; the intercession of the church is always necessary; and, of course, wives are not to be trusted because they are not as good as they used to be.

In *Survivor*, the tagline for the series provides the primary frame: contestants must "outwit, outplay, outlast" one another while being viewed and judged by the TV audience. The question "what would you do for a million dollars?" is no longer a hypothetical one. We are now privy to each contestant's strategies and schemes, his alliances and betrayals, as he battles to become the sole survivor. The particular location and the dynamics of each *Survivor* season provide the next framing level. Each locale presents its special physical and mental challenges, which then affect the interplay of contestants. Audiences seem to want to see contestants suffer, or at least see how they can withstand the physical ordeals

such as erecting shelters in adverse weather conditions or having to catch their food with homemade hunting and fishing implements. Within each season, the weekly installments serve as discrete tales with their own narrative segments and moralizations. We see, through the camera as a peeping Tom, the interactions of daily life, the challenges (or “games” devised by the show’s creators), and the Tribal Councils. There is a lack of direct authorial moralization because reality TV does not use narrative “voiceovers,” which would compromise its supposed documentary authenticity. However, Jeff Probst, the host for all the *Survivor* episodes, embodies a type of omniscient narrator: he is the impartial dispenser of rewards and punishments who also asks probing questions with implied valued judgments. Two other aids to interpreting the show are the DVD “extras,” which provide running commentary voiceovers for each episode, and *Survivor I: A Field Guide* by the originator of the series, Mark Burnett.⁶¹

Within their multileveled architectures, both *Survivor* and *Handlyng Synne* use stock or archetypal characters who facilitate the judgment of individual virtues and vices. Modern readers may think of medieval archetypes along the lines of Peasant, Outlaw, Physician, Minstrel, Monk, Knight, Damsel, and King;⁶² in a broad sense, Mannyng does acknowledge these categories, but in his use of models he is more interested in exposing essential character types we all know, rather than reinforcing ideas of status or occupation. His *exempla* are pointedly focused on both the quintessentially good and the irredeemably bad. The best “good” women are steadfast wives. In “St. Macaire,” the saint interviews two women who describe their perfect submission in their marriages, whereupon a voice from heaven declares that such women are the equal of any saint. Not surprisingly, the bad women are many and varied. The seemingly good virgin in “Quarrelsome Nun” is chaste but nevertheless goes to hell for talking too much, and the stereotypical short-tempered mother in “Cursing Mother” damns her daughter to the devil when the girl doesn’t answer quickly when called.

In the tale “Priest’s Concubine” many of the archetypal blemishes of women are displayed. The story introduces a now deceased “ryght amerous” priest (7989) and his wife, “a prestes mare,” with whom he had four sons: three priests and a scholar. On her deathbed, dreading damnation, she asks her sons to guard her corpse for three nights after her death. When she dies, an impossible battle with the devil begins for her body, a stark example of the eternal damnation awaiting women for sexual and social sins. On the third night an overwhelming crowd of loudly howling fiends fills up the house and takes both body and bier away to “noun wyst whore” (8068). The bereft sons conclude that the fiends’ mysterious destination for the body reflects the damnation of the soul, and the youngest son, “a skolere,” preaches the sign all over England “[f]or to dampne & stroye þat synne, / þat no womman falle þer ynne” (8079–80). The priest’s wife stands as an exemplar for women’s typically rapacious sexual appetite: “Comunly forsake þey none / þat eure made of flesshe & bone” (7927–29). The narrator explains that she sins because she “dysturbleth the holy lyff / Of the priest þurgh lecherye” (7944–45). All of creation, in fact, deplores her (7948–51), because the wife disturbs the mass, which benefits three groups—those living, those in paradise, and those in purgatory—“dampne þat womman to be lore / And kurse the tyme that she was bore” (7971–72). The woman’s body competes with the body of Christ, and when the husband’s attentions focus on her concupiscence

rather than the holy fleshly presence of Christ in the mass, she is damned for her blasphemous challenge and her individual sins of lust and pride impact the entire community.

Examples of good or sinful men offer a much larger menu of possibilities and hence the vast majority of characters in Mannyn's tales are men. A man is generous or selfish, chaste or lustful, open to God's visions or closed to them. Two different *exempla* illustrate how the tales show both sides of morality. In "Hermit and the Dove," the hermit loses the Holy Ghost in the shape of a dove when he desires an Egyptian woman. But, through fasting and praying, he lures the dove back into his mouth. In contrast, the "Hypocritical Monk" would rather die unconfessed than admit his religious fervor was a fake. In "The Bridge of Dread," a wide range of these archetypes is on display. When a knight falls ill, he has a vision that he later recounts to his credulous friends who had thought he was dead. In this dream, he saw a bridge, the nasty black stinking water that flows under it, and Paradise beyond, filled with heavenly meadows, gem-encrusted houses, and beautiful people. The bridge has an unusual property in that it only allows men "clene of euery trespassse" to cross over it (1430). The knight then gives an analysis of those who were able to make it to Paradise—the generous priest, the prayerful monk—and those who fell into the water of Hell—the merciless man and Steven the lecher.

This same tendency to archetypes is apparent in *Survivor: All-Stars*, where contestants were chosen for having already presented strong personality types on previous seasons of the show; it is in their extreme personality tics that we find our villains, our heroes, our liars, our faithful friends. The range of personality types is, of course, not accidental. The cast of contestants has been carefully selected to create what the producers call a "Chinese menu of kinds of people."⁶³ The DVD casting checklist counsels that the most important advice for a contestant is "be yourself" but also "be your extreme self."⁶⁴ When the players first arrive on the beach in the first episode, Ethan notes, "I'm impressed with the group. We've got the mom, the nice guy, the military guy, the hot chick."⁶⁵ These assessments are true, but they are merely overlays to deeper, more persistent personality types. The stereotypical "good" women of *All-Stars* have a number of qualities in common—they are charming, pretty, and they are generally nice to the other players. They are smart (and even willing to be devious in their relationships), but they align themselves with strong males, keeping their own strategies hidden. Characters like Amber Brkich, the eventual winner, and Jenna Morasca fill the role of princesses, using their beauty and charm in much the same way as fairytale heroines do. Tina Wesson, winner of *Survivor: Australia*, is older and thus more queen than princess. Tina is so beloved that she is the only *Survivor* contestant who has never received a single vote against her. When she is the first player to be expelled from *All-Stars*, it seems more of a *coup d'état* than an elimination. Kathy, who is a psychologist in "real life," serves as the wise woman of the tribe.

Interestingly, the positive females on *Survivor* are modernized versions of Mannyn's good women—community builders who don't rock the patriarchal boat. But viewers soon learn this is simply the surface of the women's "truthiness."⁶⁶ They may appear subservient and meek on the surface, but, in fact, are playing just as hard as the men are for the million-dollar prize. The

prickly women fall into a number of categories. Physically strong women such as Alicia rightfully worry that they may be perceived as physical threats not only to other women, but also to the men. Garish, overbearing, and outspoken women such as truck-driving Sue, self-professed “She Devil” Shi Ann, and “vixen” Jerri epitomize a male right-wing talk show host’s fear of “feminazis.” They talk too much, they insist on their own individuality too much, and they make their desire to win too palpable. It is a foregone conclusion that they cannot win.

The admirable male *All-Stars* contestants include Colby and Ethan, both of whom have an air of princely charm about them. Colby Donaldson, a handsome, athletic Texan, likely lost *Survivor: Australia* because he valued alliance over personal desire. He is the Gary Cooper of survivors. Lex and Rupert are no less upright than Ethan and Colby, but they are clearly from a lower social class and as such epitomize the common man. Rudy, on the other hand, is immune from this class distinction; his more advanced age and attitude set him apart as a wise elder. The ignoble men are similarly divided by class. Boston Rob is a street schemer compared to Richard Hatch’s Machiavellian manipulator. In symbolic opposition to Rudy, Big Tom is the old fool.

Since *Survivor* is a social game at its core, we watch not only how these types interact, but who dominates and wins. Whereas Mannyng uses archetypes to identify “good” and “bad” to demonstrate who will win salvation, in *Survivor*, “good” and “bad” do not necessarily correlate to winning anything. For the producers of the show, the best characters illustrate sex–conflict–humor, so it is not surprising that the overly sexualized Jerri was chosen as the “best” survivor ever according to the casting director, even though she never wins the game. For the participants, it is not the “good” participant, but the person who is most adept at manipulating “alliances” who wins a million dollars. Although Amber is chosen the winner of *All-Stars*, partly because of her savvy abilities as a manipulator, it is mainly because, as she herself admits, she attached herself to the coattails of the one person—Boston Rob—who was especially skilled at extracting promises of loyalty only to later break those promises at the moments most propitious for his own advantage. It is only for the viewers that the show, like a contemporary penitential, displays positive and negative models in an ethical dimension. While the “All-Star” label implies some special merit, the fiercely competitive environment of the show undermines the idea of merit (or, virtue), so that it is evoked only in moot situations, such as in the final votes when the jury agonizes over who is the most “deserving.” Pop culture critic Rob Horning sees merit here recast as a “Machiavellian zest for manipulation, then superimposed retrospectively by jury members trying to rationalize the viciousness required to triumph. ‘He played the game well and deserved to win,’ they say of connivers like first-season winner Richard.”⁶⁷

The Seven Deadly Sins occupy a central structural position in *Handlyng Synne*. Three of these sins—pride, envy, and covetousness—are sins of thwarted relationships, of perverted love. By comparing these three in Mannyng and *Survivor* we can see the clearest cultural divide between the two texts. If Mannyng’s tales are about how ruthless people are in amassing wealth, then so is *Survivor*. But

whereas the medieval text condemns such greed, the modern work extols it. Pride has always been considered the foundation of the other sins, and it certainly is so in *Handlyng Synne* and *Survivor*. Not to be confused with vanity, which is a concern with appearance, pride is a desire to be like God, if only in one's own circle. It is not merely having a high regard for one's own abilities. The prideful are driven by their inappropriate self-esteem to prove their greater worth and feel superior to others. Hypocrisy and backbiting are their tools. Because pride is a sin of destructive comparison, God punishes the prideful, not just because what they did was wrong, but also because they did something wrong that corroded the community. Under the rubric of the commandment not to kill, Mannyng cautions that the prideful Backbiter kills three people. Two might be expected: the Backbiter kills himself and the person he slandered, but surprisingly, the third category of victims is the entire audience who hear the gossip (1585–1600). Innocent communal bystanders are destroyed by this act of social alienation.

In the story of “Hyprocritical Monk,” the monk plays out hypocrisy in his death-bed confession. Mannyng’s introductory comment is that some people “for pryde have delyte / for to be holde an ypocryte” (3137–38). This monk, on his deathbed, confesses that twice he ate in secret while pretending to continue a fast so that he could win a no-eating challenge. But despite this confession, the devil appears at the end of the tale, wraps up the monk’s legs in his tail, and shoves his head down the monk’s throat. This is quite a punishment for two small indiscretions, which leads us to consider that he is in fact being punished for something else. Mark Miller cleverly argues for “the quite peculiar character of the danger that Mannyng announces—that of finding prideful delight, not in being a hypocrite, but in being taken for one. Through this confession he wishes to reinforce his reputation of himself as a virtuoso of self-denial; he wants to offer to his fellows the image of himself as the one who not only did all the fasting, but who was so committed to it that he finds himself tortured at his death by the recollection of two minor violations.”⁶⁸ His damnation is intensified by his use of false confession. The hypocritical pride he takes in proving his superiority to his brothers illustrates the tension between the sense of self and the community that was often seen in the medieval monastery.⁶⁹ Community life was pitted against a freelance spirituality called *singularitas*.

We would naturally suppose that all contestants on *Survivor: All-Stars* would have pride in their abilities, but they are clearly divided in how they use their pride as weapons of personal aggrandizement. The appropriately confident include the good guys Colby, who is totally self-effacing when necessary, Ethan, who believes he is true to himself and plays for grassroots soccer, and Rupert, always ready to admit his mistakes such as a particular house plan, which he says was “the dumbest idea I’ve ever had.”⁷⁰ The *exemplar par excellence* of pride is Richard. The winning survivor of the very first season of the series, he is confident in the extreme. In his confessions, Richard boasts not just about how good he is, but about how bad everyone else is. He incessantly backbites all the other players because in his eyes they are stupid and easily manipulated. His plan? “I’ll just try to stand back and let these egos decide what we’re going to do.”⁷¹ In an interview on the *CBS Early Show* he tried to present his pride as a performance to host Harry Smith: “I had a plan, Harry. I always have a plan. People think of me as cocky, arrogant, all these things. And I came into that game, even though I knew these people, with their impression of me being that, being negative.

And so I thought I had to do some things that made it seem as if I am kind of a difficult, arrogant, cocky person, try as I might. Otherwise, they would have thought I had something up my sleeve.”⁷² Later, at the *All-Star* reunion, when Jeff Probst makes a comment that Richard (unlike Jerri) enjoys his status as a villain, Richard doesn’t contradict him. Like the Hypocritical Monk, he plays at confession.

One particular episode showcases Richard’s hypocritical penchant for self-fashioning. His lone contribution to the group is his ability to catch fish, and on one foray he is attacked by a shark. *Survivor* viewers recognize that the shark is an important image in the entire series. In the opening credits, when host Jeff Probst says, “Who will outwit, outplay and outlast all the others to become the sole Survivor?”⁷³ a menacing tropical reef shark swims across the screen. During the fight, Richard grabs the shark, jabs it with a spear, and continues to hold on to it although it bites him twice. When the shark bites him the first time, he bites it back. Although it is only a little shark and its bite barely breaks his skin, Richard markets himself as a hero. Showing off both bites (the one on him and the one on the shark), he insists on his symbolic identification with shark nature, the nature of a true survivor. His battle scar contrasts vividly with the insect sores players are shown picking at earlier in the episode. However, Richard is not the virtuoso Machiavellian genius or “actor” he confesses to be. He is just an amoral player, contemptuous of community norms. Colby refers to Richard’s independence outside any meaningful alliances as a “cancer in the tribe that needs to be cut out.”⁷⁴

Envy and Covetousness are twin sins. Saint Thomas Aquinas first made the distinction between the two by saying that Envy wants to take things from the “haves,” while Covetousness wants to keep them away from the “have-nots.”⁷⁵ They share three obsessive motivations for acquiring more material goods: for the power they represent; from a fearful need to store up a surplus for a vaguely defined time of want; and “just because.” To Mannying, these are clearly insidious transgressions that bring together the contested areas of the fourteenth-century moral life produced from the simultaneous rise of the individual and the rise of money: the quarrel among the interests of private life, public-mindedness, money, and ethics. In “The Hard Judge,” Mannying argues that the greedy are not really happy because of the insatiable demands of money addiction. This judge goes to hell because he doesn’t give mercy to others in order to line his own pockets. “Three Dishonest Executors” sabotage their own communities when they keep dead men’s money rather than use it for Masses for their souls, and the “Cambridgeshire Miser Parson” eats his coins rather than leave them behind when he dies. With his rapaciousness, he harms the capitalist economy because his hoarding keeps money out of circulation. In sum, they are without concern for goodness or truth because they willingly harm the least powerful in society. The tale of “Lucretius and St. Bernice” portrays an already rich landowner who kills Bernice for her land so that he can give an elaborate feast. Lucretius is condemned when, at the feast, a baby held by a poor hungry woman miraculously speaks and damns him to the eternal fire. Mannying moralizes that “Ful wykked ys that coueytysse, wuth outhen mennes gode falsly to ryse” (6043–45).

Survivor sets up a dialogue between nostalgia for a pre-capitalist society and the comforts of the viewing public’s culture. Two processes, the creation of

scarcity and the accumulation of wealth, form the basis of a capitalist economy. The tremendous difficulties the survivors live with—lack of food and water, lack of comfortable shelter, lack of creature comforts such as suntan lotion and insect repellent (not to mention lack of cell phones and TVs)—amply remind viewers of what the comfortable life is as capitalism has taught us to define it. Of course, at the heart of *Survivor* contestants are attempting to succeed at others' expense. There are a few dissenting voices to this goal—Jenna, for example, is one doubter, who actually left *All-Stars* before it was over to go home to be with her terminally ill mother; she questions the enterprise for everyone: "Why are we here? We are such morons! We left everything we love to come starve."⁷⁶ After recording her desire to leave, the camera cuts to a pelican—the medieval symbol of maternal love. Another apostate to the materialistic message of *Survivor* is Lex, who is betrayed because of his promise of loyalty to Rob in a moment of weakness (Rob tells Lex that if he, Lex, will "protect" Amber by not voting against her at a Tribal Council, then he, Rob, will "protect" Lex later, which of course he doesn't do).⁷⁷ Lex appears at the Tribal Council with his hair cut into a fierce mohawk and berates Rob: "You sold out your values, you sold out your character, and you sold out your friends for a stack of greenbacks. I hope it was worth it because that money will never be enough to buy it all back."⁷⁸ Lex has hit on the whirlpool of ironies that make up *Survivor*: they are all playing a game to win a million dollars while also acting as if friendship and community are beyond price.

Indeed, it is not possible to win *Survivor* without forging "alliances," but only with the understanding that these alliances are temporary and can be broken at a moment's notice to satisfy an individual imperative. More specifically, in order to win, you must first build small communities within and across the larger "tribal" communities, and then, like a contemporary Iago, you must set various individuals against each other in order to advance yourself. But unlike in Shakespeare, or as for a medieval penitential, the wages of sin are not death but monetary victory. There is still the question, though, of how the members of the "jury" on *Survivor*, which is where the audience most likely aligns itself, will ultimately judge the so-called winners. It is likely that Amber won the final vote partly because in her arguments as to why she should win, she asserted that, although she had aligned herself with Rob, she was not as much of a betrayer as he was, and because many of the final votes against Rob were grudge or "payback" votes.⁷⁹ The problem of living a satisfying life within capitalism is represented by the struggle to advance ourselves while confronting fears of social ostracism that might be the result of our personally motivated and too selfish actions. This dialectic can be stated in a number of ways: a desire for individual gain versus the good of the community; ruthless self-interest versus trusting interdependence; competition versus intimacy; or most simply, money versus love. Many contemporary theorists see the war between self-interest and affiliation as deeply ingrained in our psychic and relational life.⁸⁰ *Survivor* argues that yes, it is a Hobbesian world, after all, but that does not mean discomfort cannot be expressed at the personal pain inflicted and experienced in such a world. Covetousness, along with its attendant aggression, is explicitly validated, but is also condemned.⁸¹ But this condemnation can also ring hollow when it comes with a one-million-dollar payoff. And since one of the big surprises of the final episode of *All-Stars* was Rob's marriage proposal

to Amber, which she accepted before the winner was announced, both Amber and Rob, in effect, got away with the money, and perhaps also love (unless the proposal and its acceptance were somehow part and parcel of both Amber's and Rob's desire to win the game at whatever cost—this troublesome question will always nag).

Survivor portrays a teleological version of the natural evolution of civilized man, from cave man, to medieval man, to contemporary city-dweller. Players are placed in "tribes" to live in primitive locations, all of which recall a nostalgic time of cooperative society uncomplicated by the layers of modern living. "In the face of ideological hegemony or cultural conformity, the dream of community can be summoned to support liberating values of egalitarians, harmony, connectedness," argues Andreovich. "Such images of community have become a way of protecting ourselves against the anonymity of postmodern society and the isolation of extreme individuality. Precisely because we are not fixed in a single community, we find it a compelling word to speak of a 'sense of community.'" ⁸² As soon as the tribes merge, competition takes over and players move on to the real business of the game. Not only are survivors competing for the million dollars but for other rewards along the way, such as trips off the island for a day's vacation at a spa, a party on a yacht, all they can eat and drink, phone calls home, a truck, and so on. The many motifs of outmoded tribalism incorporated into the show, such as contestants painting themselves, creating totems, eating native foods, and watching tribal dances, give the show the taint of a faux-multiculturalism, for these scenes also focus an imperial gaze on the spectral performance of the supposedly "indigenous," and paradoxically confirm the superiority of the American values of individual competition and success. ⁸³

Marketing-based consumerism is put on full display in *Survivor*, and the very presentation of the rewards, emphasizing who has something and who doesn't, are designed to promote covetousness. Players returning from rewards are often reluctant to speak of the luxuries they have indulged in. Keat Murray argues that the show "allows room for capitalism to rationalize its own practices and to naturalize the increasingly polarized social structure produced by cutthroat competition. It persistently dictates that consuming goods equips consumers with the trappings of upward mobility." Social Darwinism is by no means politically or ideologically neutral. In the Horatio Alger version, "everyone must battle tooth and claw for a limited supply of capital and success." ⁸⁴ The abstract symbolism of money is essential for capitalism to operate. And *Survivor* has its own symbolic currency, the immunity necklace. This piece of jewelry, won at a challenge, protects the wearer from being voted out at the Tribal Council. It always looks like a rendition of the host country's native arts, and therefore enacts a colonial reference. Because it symbolically buys protection from exile, every player wants it. And even though each contestant is free to give it to another player, no one ever does. When asked if he wants to give his immunity to another player, Boston Rob says with no hesitation, "I covet immunity." ⁸⁵

"Pers Toller" is Mannyng's long tale illustrating covetousness and teaching that the stingy man can be forgiven if he participates in a plan of penitential

reimbursements: “And gyue agen that ych thing that they have take yn okeryng” (5565). In this story, a beggar makes an outrageous wager that he can get some good out of Pers, a notoriously avaricious moneylender. He provokes Pers so much that, unable to find a stone, Pers throws a loaf of bread at the beggar. Three days later Pers becomes very ill and dreams of judgment day when his good and bad deeds are weighed. The loaf, although not given for love of God, outweighs all of his bad deeds. An angel delivers the first moral: alms are good penance (5672). Pers repents and internalizes what he learns. Pers, now holy and kind, gives his clothes to a beggar. But when the beggar immediately sells them, Pers selfishly cries himself to sleep, and again dreams of God, this time dressed in the donated clothes, praising Pers’s charity and introducing another moral: charity is giving to God (5735). Pers now gives all his wealth to poor men and has himself sold into slavery to a Christian. Pers is such a good slave that all the other workers envy him, his master wants to set him free, and Jesus gives him another vision, telling him he has won grace (5872). While on pilgrimage, Pers’s old servants almost don’t recognize him because penance has changed his color. Here, Pers transforms pilgrimage into an exile experience. Forcing himself to be alone, acting as an individual, he is brought to confront fully his subjectivity. Although exile might lead to alienation and separation from society in modern culture, for Pers it redeems him and makes him fully part of the Christian faith. Running from discovery, Pers, with a sacred flame in his mouth, halts to heal a deaf and dumb porter who praises Pers as he is assumed into heaven like Enoch and Eli. The story closes with an appeal to usurers to mend their ways (5939).

The primary frame of this story is the overall frame of *Handlyng Synne*—Confession—and Pers himself goes through multiple experiences that produce increasingly insightful confessions to God. The secondary frame, Covetousness, is also unambiguously presented. The tale itself has its own moral (that even usurers can be redeemed), and again we have a happy reflection of this idea in the life of Pers. At the same time, numerous embedded morals augment the frame and tie the tale to other tales with similar themes, reinforcing the didactic thrust of the whole text. The speakers quoted in Pers’s tale all present variations on the themes of avarice, charity, and penance. Besides teaching us that anyone, even moneylenders, can find grace, the text makes a number of other salient points, both stated and understated: an angel says that giving alms is good penance, a dream vision relates that all charitable giving is to God, and the slave owner says all men can turn to good. In all, it is a tightly constructed didactic package that reflects the important concerns of Mannyng’s Christian worldview. Pers begins his quest when he is forced to confront his personal selfishness in the face of overwhelming communal need. But he cannot reach the turning point on his own—it is the promptings of authorities and communal experience that make him the fire-breathing saint he eventually becomes. The audience identifies with Pers’s experience, which confirms their own Christian values.

Episode Fourteen of *Survivor: All-Stars*, “Cinema Para-grease-o,” offers an instructive parallel to “Pers.” This segment, coming just before the season finale, presents an especially interesting examination of the conflicts between the individual and the group. The moral is implied by the episode’s defining and oft-repeated word “paranoia.” In the context in which the players use it, paranoia encompasses the fear that others will take away what is yours, including your

well-being, your success, your possessions, and even your own individual identity. To win, contestants must control their worries about the implicit risks of capitalist competition. As the segment opens, Tom and Rupert are working in terrible weather and generally complaining about all of their discomforts; in his "confession," Rob states that he "hates everyone" and wishes they would all just "shut up."⁸⁶ Just as the physical and mental worlds are shown deteriorating, so are the alliances. Rob wins the first challenge and his reward is a Chevy Colorado pick-up and a night at the drive-in. He chooses Amber to accompany him, and on the trip she learns that she has also won a car, a Chevy Malibu.

Probst announces they will watch *Lord of the Flies*, the 1961 Peter Brooks movie made from the 1954 novel by William Golding. According to Probst, the movie "inspired this show."⁸⁷ When she first saw the promotional materials for the series, Amber thought it was a "real *Lord of the Flies*."⁸⁸ The movie is a well-known cultural touchstone and explores in detail the horrific exploits of a band of shipwrecked young boys who cannot translate their civilized home society, with its rules for proper behavior and decorum, to a deserted island because of their paranoia about each other. Getting food and shelter for survival is continually disrupted by the competitive turmoil within the boys' group. The weaker boys are forced into subjugation while the stronger, assertive boys become the leaders who promote not the welfare of the group, but their own personal agendas. Clearly, the dichotomies in *Survivor*—the individual versus the group, and material possessions versus social relationship—are displayed starkly in the movie.

Snuggled in the back of the truck on their "first date" and eating popcorn, Rob and Amber watch the part of the movie that features the infamous shot of a pig's severed head on a pike, Golding's symbol of the depravity of the individual run amok.⁸⁹ The editing of the episode presents this, queerly, as a beautiful moment, when Romber (the media's nickname for the pair) can enjoy each other and forget the game. Sort of. Amber thanks Rob for giving her a car (which he didn't actually do), and he replies, "You earned it."⁹⁰ This is the world of supposedly fair competition where everything that is earned is somehow fully deserved. In his confession, Rob tells us how great his relationship with Amber is, but he "still isn't going to forfeit one million dollars" on her behalf.⁹¹ As Rob and Amber debate the strength of their commitment, the camera shows a spider breaking her elaborate web. Back at camp, Amber debates whether to tell the other players that she has also won a car, thinking that their envy might work against her. She and Rob also bring everyone candy, but still keep a portion for themselves. This transparent gesture of "ours" versus "yours" is something that Rupert notices. We overhear various conversations about "loyalty" as well as "paranoia," while Rob in typical fashion devises a way to pit Tom and Rupert against each other.⁹²

What is to be learned from the carefully contrived "lesson" of this episode? Although several of the participants have shared their belief that ruthless individualism and competition lead to personal and social destruction, still, in their confessions, both Amber and Rob discuss how much they want to win. Amber says (twice), "I can taste the money."⁹³ And this attitude leads them to victory. In the final challenge, Rob dares Amber to quit and both discuss their love for each other and money.⁹⁴ Whether fiction or hyper-reality, Rob and Amber act unsure of each other and play out a kind of psychodrama for the majority of American

couples who argue incessantly, we are told, over finances.⁹⁵ No one inside the series appears to learn anything, because the didactic focus is not within the narrative but is, rather, turned outward to the audience. Whether or not the viewership is convinced—and what, exactly, they are convinced of—is ambiguous, the lavish corporate sponsorship of the series reflects their confidence in the popularity of the message. The very last episode dwells on the confrontation between members of the jury and Rob. His tearful repentance seems genuine, as he receives a merciless haranguing for his continual betrayal of group trust. But in the running commentary on the DVD (recorded after the show aired and winners were known), Rob is openly dismissive of the jurors' criticism of his behavior.

Handlyng Synne, through nuances in its seemingly simple framework, leads readers to identify sin, eradicate it, and thus gain salvation. In addition to his stated morals concerning confession and penance, Mannyng weaves a finely coordinated set of other beliefs that are central to the theology of the medieval church: The real power of the spoken word, the absolute necessity of the priesthood, problems of female sexuality, and the proper uses of the church's wealth are among his special concerns. The text also locates human sin beyond the purely hierarchical relationship of a human with his or her God to include important issues of communal morality. Ultimately, Mannyng teaches that the ramifications of sin affect the individual, the church, the Christian community, and God himself. By examining the problems of salvation in medieval Christianity, he questions, but eventually upholds, the foundations of his worldview as enunciated and confirmed by church doctrine. Ideally, the Christian community provides an important space for fellowship and shared values. Those who do not play by the group's rules are exiled to hell. Although some of his morals initially seem disjunctive and some of his value judgments may seem at odds with the twenty-first century, he argues that there is such a thing as truth, and regardless of individual desire, each human is committed to follow the path of goodness and charity as God has enunciated it.

Mark Andrejevic has claimed that *Survivor* is about "moving forward into the past" into an imagined "friction-free space."⁹⁶ "Imagined" is the key word here, for *Survivor* makes a number of assumptions about the past which are useful for its own idiosyncratic interpretation of modern culture. *Survivor*'s very setting implies a return to a premodern setting, or in Andrejevic's terms, "pre-mass environment."⁹⁷ As we have already noted, the language of tribalism infiltrates the series, but has this virgin soil that offers the possibility of a guilt-free capitalist desire ever actually existed? Burnett has spoken and written extensively about the meaning of his own show, and he has been very vocal in identifying "Social Darwinism" as a primary theme.⁹⁸ Unquestionably, the show encourages exploitation and extinction of those less able, and there is a certain "might makes right" attitude in choosing a winner. But the strongest, most adept contestant does not win. What it really teaches is the success of ruthlessness above being the most skilled at a particular task or being "good," and thus straightforwardly argues for the "naturalness" of contemporary capitalism: the expert manipulation of one's "capital" resources matters more than inner merit or learned practical skills, and the willingness to continually adapt and readapt in protean ways to various environments, regardless of the moral perils (or loss of self-identity), is paramount. However, *Survivor*'s argument that

the same “natural” values were somehow also operative in the premodern past is not confirmed by the vernacular text from the fourteenth century examined here. Covetousness at the expense of community has not always been publicly prized by the dominant culture. While *Handlyng Synne* seeks to accommodate the accumulation of economic gains with Christian morality, and could therefore be seen as capitulating to a nascent capitalism, *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.

After the website *The Smoking Gun* revealed that many of the details in James Frey’s vividly told story of addiction and rehabilitation in his bestselling “memoir” *A Million Little Pieces* were falsified, a firestorm of public debate erupted over issues of veracity and fictionality in memoir writing. In “A note to the reader” now appended to all editions of his work, Frey writes, “there is much debate now about the respective natures of works of memoir, nonfiction, and fiction,” but essentially a memoir is a combination of facts and embellishments that carries an “emotional” truth.⁹⁹ Authors are compelled to present fiction as truth, because, according to Michael Coffey, executive managing editor at *Publishers Weekly*, “Fiction seems to have lost a lot of authority in the culture.”¹⁰⁰ Appealing to this appetite for emotional reality over factual truth in our post-truth world, *Survivor* offers a memoir-fiction of our culture masquerading as a “reality” that viewers want to believe binds them with others in an imagined moral community—a moral community, nevertheless, that the show actively seeks to both build and then smash to pieces.

Notes

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2. Robert Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 3.
3. Mark Miller, “Displaced Souls, Idle Talk, Spectacular Scenes: *Handlyng Synne* and the Perspective of Agency,” *Speculum* 71 (1996): 606–32.
4. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 87.
5. A.J. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*, trans. G.L. Campbell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 57.
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7. David Aers, *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360–1430* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 2 and 4.
8. See Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 97.
9. See Anthony Low, *Aspects of Subjectivity: Society and Individuality from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare and Milton* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003), pp. 2–20.

10. Rodney Stark, "How Christianity (and Capitalism) Led to Science," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2 December 2005: B11.
11. John Gilchrist, *The Church and Economic Activity in the Middle Ages* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 7.
12. Gilchrist, *The Church and Economic Activity*, p. 15.
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16. A.W. Crosby, *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
17. Aaron Gurevich, *The Origins of European Individualism*, trans. Katharine Judelson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), p. 164.
18. See Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Francis of Assisi: Performing the Gospel Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).
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20. Stark, "How Christianity (and Capitalism) Led to Science," p. B11.
21. Pat Robertson, *The New World Order* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), p. 228.
22. David G. Hallman, *Spiritual Values for Earth Community* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000).
23. Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 331.
24. Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984).
25. *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, 18 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1907–21), 1:73.
26. G.R. Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), p. 46.
27. Judith Shaw, "Influence of Canonical Episcopal Reforms on Popular Books of Instruction," in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), p. 45 [44–60].
28. Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 99.
29. Thomas of Chobham: *Summa Confessorum*, ed. F. Broomfield, *Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensia* 25 (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1968); quoted in Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, p. 296.
30. See Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, p. 292.
31. Cultural critic Clay Calvert calls us an "American Voyeur Nation," obsessed with the mass consumption of information about others' apparently real and unguarded lives: *Voyeur Nation: Media, Privacy, and Peering into Modern Culture*, Critical Studies in Communication and in Cultural Industries (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 6.
32. The tribes included Chapera (Red Buffs) Tribe: Amber Brkich, Tom Buchanan, Alicia Calaway, Rob Cesternino, Susan Hawk, "Boston" Rob Mariano; Saboga (Yellow Buffs) Tribe: Rupert Boneham, Jenna Lewis, Jerri Manthey, Ethan Zohn; Mogo Mogo (Green Buffs) Tribe: Colby Donaldson, Richard Hatch, Shi Ann Huang, Jenna Morasca, Lex Van Den Berghe, Kathy Vavrick-O'Brien.
33. J.A. Mosher, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious Literature of England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 11.

34. Bede, *History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Sherley Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 103.
35. *An Alphabet of Tales: An English Fifteenth-Century Translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum*, EETS OS 126–27, ed. Mary Banks (London: Kegan Paul, 1904), p. 217.
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37. *Cursor Mundi*, EETS OS 209, ed. R[ichard] Morris (London: Smith, 1940), p. 6.
38. William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. Thorlac Turville-Petre, *Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/seenet/piers/windows/index-scribal-div1-N64533.html>.
39. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Larry Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).
40. Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 131–36. All subsequent quotations from *Handlyng Synne* are noted by line number in parenthetical citations.
41. Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 141–45.
42. Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), p. 197.
43. Jonathan Metz, “From Scopophilia to *Survivor*, a Brief History of Voyeurism,” *Textual Practice* 18.3 (2004): 418 [415–34].
44. Sam Brenton and Reuben Cohen, *Shooting People: Adventures in Reality TV* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 17.
45. John M. Higgins and Jim Benson, “Reality Check: The Revolution in ‘Unscripted’ Fare has Hollywood Asking Just What Exactly Is a Writer?” *Broadcasting & Cable*, 18 July 2005: 8 [8–9].
46. Quoted in Jeanne McDowell, “How Reality TV Fakes It,” *Time*, 6 February 2006: 166 [160–62].
47. Episode 816, “The Sole Surviving All-Star,” Disc Six, *Survivor: All-Stars*, DVD, produced by Mark Burnett and Charlie Parsons (Los Angeles, CA: Castaway Television Productions Inc., Mark Burnett Productions, SEG, Survivor Productions LLC, 2004). All subsequent references to *Survivor: All-Stars*, including quotations from individual cast members, are to this DVD edition.
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49. Episode 817, “Reunion,” Disc Six, *Survivor: All Stars*.
50. Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 195–228.
51. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (Hartford: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 97.
52. Low, *Aspects of Subjectivity*, p. 47.
53. Thomas Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 45.
54. Mark Miller, “Displaced Souls, Idle Talk, Spectacular Scenes: *Handlyng Synne* and the Perspective of Agency,” *Speculum* 71.3 (1996): 609 [606–32].
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56. See Nancy Mason Bradbury, “Popular-Festive Forms and Beliefs in Robert Mannyng’s *Handlyng Synne*,” in *Bakhtin and Medieval Voices*, ed. Thomas Farrell (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), pp. 158–80.
57. Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. L.H. Martin et al. (London: Tavistock, 1988), p. 40 [16–49].

58. Jan Jagodozinski. "The Perversity of (Real)ity TV: A Symptom of Our Times," *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society* 8 (2003): 323 [320–32].
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61. Mark Burnett, *Survivor I: The Field Guide* (New York: TV Books, 2000).
62. See Terry Jones, *Medieval Lives* (London: BBC Books, 2004).
63. Special Features, "Casting the All-Stars," Disc Seven, *Survivor All-Stars*.
64. Special Features, "Casting the All-Stars," Disc Seven, *Survivor All-Stars*.
65. Episode 801, "They're Back," Disc One, *Survivor All-Stars*.
66. "Truthiness," a term invented by the comedian Stephen Colbert (of Comedy Central's *The Colbert Report*), refers to the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true. See "Truthiness Voted 2005 Word of the Year," *American Dialect Society*, http://www.american-dialect.org/index.php/amer-dial/truthiness_voted_2005_word_of_the_year/.
67. Rob Horning, "Survivor All-Stars," *Pop Matters*, <http://www.popmatters.com/tv/reviews/s/survivor-all-stars.shtml>.
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69. See Giles Constable, "Individualism and Institutions in Medieval Religious Communities," in *Visions of Community in the Pre-Modern World*, ed. Nicholas Howe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p. 67 [54–93].
70. Episode 804, "Wipe Out," Disc Two, *Survivor All-Stars*.
71. Episode 801, "They're Back," Disc One, *Survivor All-Stars*.
72. Richard Hatch, interview by Harry Smith, *The CBS Early Show*, CBS Broadcasting, 27 February 2004.
73. Episode 801, "They're Back," Disc One, *Survivor All-Stars*.
74. Episode 805, "I've Been Bamboozled," Disc Two, *Survivor All-Stars*.
75. W.H. Reade, *The Moral System of Dante's Inferno* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), p. 253.
76. Episode 801, "They're Back," Disc One, *Survivor All-Stars*.
77. Episode 810, "Mad Scramble and Broken Hearts," Disc Three, *Survivor All-Stars*.
78. Episode 816, "The Sole Surviving All-Star," Disc Six, *Survivor All-Stars*.
79. Episode 816, "The Sole Surviving All-Star," Disc Six, *Survivor All-Stars*.
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81. Francine Prose goes so far as to argue that *Survivor* represents the darker side of the Republican Party: "Voting Democracy Off the Island: Reality TV and the Republican Ethos," *Harpers Magazine*, March 2004: 56–72.
82. Andrejevic, *Reality TV*, p. 96.
83. See Amy Greenberg, "Americans in the Tropics," *Common-Place* 6.1 (October 2005), <http://www.common-place.org/vol-06/no-01/talk/>.
84. Keat Murray, "Surviving *Survivor*: Reading Mark Burnett's Field Guide and De-Naturalizing Social Darwinism as Entertainment," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 24 (2001): 43–54. Media scholars have often argued that the primary objective of U.S. television is to deliver viewers to advertisers, and in order to realize this objective, it is necessary for broadcasters to attract viewers to their programs and products. See James Friedman, *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 7.

85. Episode 811, "Anger, Tears, and Chaos," Disc Four, *Survivor All-Stars*.
86. Episode 815, "The Instigator," Disc Five, *Survivor All-Stars*.
87. Episode 815, "The Instigator," Disc Five, *Survivor All-Stars*.
88. Special Features, "Casting the All-Stars," Disc Seven, *Survivor All-Stars*.
89. Episode 815, "The Instigator," Disc Five, *Survivor All-Stars*.
90. Episode 815, "The Instigator," Disc Five, *Survivor All-Stars*.
91. Episode 815, "The Instigator," Disc Five, *Survivor All-Stars*.
92. Episode 815, "The Instigator," Disc Five, *Survivor All-Stars*.
93. Episode 815, "The Instigator," Disc Five, *Survivor All-Stars*.
94. Episode 816, "The Sole Surviving All-Star," Disc Six, *Survivor All-Stars*.
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96. Andrejevic, *Reality TV*, p. 202.
97. Andrejevic, *Reality TV*, p. 202.
98. Burnett, *Survivor I: The Field Guide*, p. 144.
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CHAPTER 4

BACK TO THE FUTURE: LIVING THE LIMINAL LIFE IN THE MANOR HOUSE AND THE MEDIEVAL DREAM

Betsy McCormick

Both the reality TV show and the medieval dream vision create performative and playful liminal spaces through which to work out sociocultural problems. Both forms also reveal the power of rigid social stereotypes to overwhelm the individual. Ultimately, liminal spaces, whether medieval or modern, reinforce the normative communities that create them as “games.”

Saddle Up and Ride off into the Past with the Newest PBS Reality Show: Texas Ranch House—Where: The Texas Range—When: 1867—Who: Wranglers, Cowhands, Cooks, Vaqueros, Ranchers, and anyone interested in taking part—What: Going back in time to live and ranch on the Western frontier—Why: Experience the past first-hand and get the challenge of a lifetime!

—Casting call for *Texas Ranch House*¹

Or te reviens a toy meismes, reprens ton scens et plus ne te troubles pour telz fanffelues. [Come back to yourself, recover your senses, and do not trouble yourself anymore over such absurdities.]

—*Dame Raison* to Christine, in Christine de Pisan,
*Livre de la Cité des Dames*²

To go back to the past, let alone come back from the future, one has to have gone some “where”; yet, outside the realms of science fiction, *Texas Ranch House*’s promise of a trip to the Texas range circa 1867 is not physically possible. To come back to one’s self, again, one has to have gone some “where” in the first place; yet, the medieval dream vision details the fictional journey to and from the ineffable world of a dream. In any of these instances where, exactly, does the individual go? Into the realm of the liminal.

A clearly defined area lying outside the everyday world, the liminal realm provides a safe (because separate) space in which to experiment with social rules and norms. This other realm is the destination for the particular journey entailed

in enacting, as well as watching, a reality TV show or reading a medieval dream vision; both experiences are ones that require the voyeur/reader to accompany the player/dreamer on their journey into the liminal. The fundamental purpose of a liminal space is to produce this kind of performative “experience,” one reason that theories of liminality have developed within both anthropology and performance studies. One of the leading proponents of the liminal, anthropologist Victor Turner defines the liminal space as a “complex sequence of episodes in . . . space-time, [that] may also include subversive and ludic (or playful) events”—an apt description of any reality show or any dream.³ According to Turner, the liminal encompasses a two-part process: the first part is a journey that will allow the individual to take “experimental steps” and the second part is the actual performance of the journey.⁴ This performance of the liminal enables the discovery of cultural meaning as insights derived through the performance help to “establish goals and models for future experience.”⁵ That is, cultural meaning is discovered via the experience of the liminal because the liminal is a space allowing social/cultural elements to become separated, isolated, and, ultimately, reconsidered. So the experience of the liminal is one of experimenting and reconfiguring the elements of “real” life through performative play; as Turner observes, “in liminality people ‘play’ with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them.”⁶

Such a notion of performative play seems an apt way to consider participation in experiences that take us outside of the everyday realm, whether that experience is a reality TV show or a medieval dream vision. Both the reality TV show and the medieval dream vision create a liminality, an otherness, that reflects and refracts reality—the fundamental parallel between reality shows like the PBS *House* series and the kind of metafictional dream visions popular in the Middle Ages. Turner suggests that the liminal demands “‘living through,’ ‘thinking back’ and ‘willing or wishing forward’”—thus the experience of the liminal produces a perspective on the past, on the present, and on the future.⁷ In this sense, the PBS variant of reality TV, the *House* series, provides a “back to the future” experience for player and viewer, as does the medieval dream vision for its reader/player.

Although Turner certainly did not anticipate reality TV, many of his observations seem *apropos* to the genre. For instance, Turner sees liminality’s essence as “the analysis of culture into factors and their free or ‘ludic’ recombination in any and every possible pattern, however weird”—a description that certainly explains the stranger variants of reality TV.⁸ Moreover, since the characteristics that mark liminality—a separate space created by detailed rules that allow for ludic freedom—are also indicative of a game space, it is not surprising that so many reality shows construct themselves as games.⁹ For example, a show like *Wife Swap* (ABC) styles itself as different from its rival *Trading Spouses* (FOX) not in its basic premise, but rather because it does not grant a cash prize as does *Trading Spouses*. An important consequence of this difference is that *Wife Swap* is construed as a more highbrow show than *Trading Spouses* (in fact, most FOX shows are considered among the lowest of lowbrow reality offerings). However, the demarcation between the liminal space and the game space is not one of highbrow versus lowbrow, but rather one of purpose. Whereas *Trading Spouses* promotes and awards a cash prize, in *Wife Swap* the experience of the swap itself is the reward. Where a game space

produces an experience along with a product/prize, in a liminal space, the experience *is* the product/prize.

Reality shows that construct some kind of unusual living situation create just such a liminally experiential product for both player and viewer. The space created in these shows exists outside of daily life; participation automatically means separation from the everyday world and entry into an alternative daily life. Specific restrictions and rules create and drive this separation. These rules and restrictions vary from show to show, and their articulation is usually an extensive part of the show's running format. The *House* series of shows (aired on BBC and PBS) specifically view themselves as liminal spaces, not game spaces: as the casting call for *Texas Ranch House* notes, compensation will not be awarded for this show's participants because "it's important to recognize this is not a game show. The reward is the unique experience."¹⁰ Instead of winning a fortune, a husband, or even a job, the *House* series ask contemporary participants to experience and embody the stereotypes, cultural strictures, and social hierarchies of the past by inhabiting a historical role.¹¹ While it might seem similar to other variations within its genre like *Big Brother* (CBS) or *The Real World* (MTV)—shows that also force a disparate group of people to live and work together in some kind of contrived situation—the *House* series sees itself as different from its rivals. Where shows like *Big Brother* or the *Surreal Life* (VH1) ask their participants to coexist for money, fame, or public titillation, the *House* series requires its participants to "experience" the historical past.

Yet, as each of the *House* shows demonstrates, the reality of this experiment proves far more complex than the simple allure of "experience the past first-hand and get the challenge of a lifetime!" After all, the ability of any of us to truly go back to the days of yesteryear is a romantic notion at best. Instead, the thread that ties the various *House* shows together is the emotive reaction of its players to the rigid class, gender, and social stereotypes of the past. In the actual experience of living in these liminal variations of the past, individual players discover that they can't change their new reality to match their "real" existence. Forced to experience and embody the liminal, participants have two choices—adapt or drop out—since the only way for an individual player to fundamentally change this new reality is by leaving the show and the liminal. Ultimately, the *House* participants are unable to overcome their new reality's strictures any better (or for that matter any worse) than our actual forebears did. This reality underlying the *House* experience probably lies closer to the actuality of the past than the period clothes, buildings, and tools surrounding the participants.¹² However, if the *House* shows cannot provide truly authentic historical experiences, they do provide an authentic *liminal* experience.

The medieval dream vision also provides an authentically liminal experience. In Turner's definition, the dream constitutes a liminal experience, comprising as it does both a journey into the dream world and the experiential performance of that journey. Because a dream vision sets up a narrative frame between an "awakened reality" and the dream space, it follows the pattern we have already seen in the *House* series between a real and a liminal life. Dream visions create a special dream space for the consideration of social/cultural issues from outside the space. The dream experience blends cultural elements from the waking world and the waking self into a new form. And like reality TV, the dream vision both

reflects and refracts the familiar world back to the dreamer. Moreover, the act of reading a dream vision draws the reader into the liminal experience along with the dreamer. As Peter Brown notes, the dream vision “intrigues and engages the interest of an audience by appealing to a common experience and by inviting its members to become analysts or interpreters.”¹³ Performative play within the dream world creates a way for both dreamer and reader to explore what Steven Kruger terms (also drawing on the idea of the liminal) “areas of betweenness” within society and culture.¹⁴ The dream itself is not “real,” but the experience of enacting or reading the dream is one that seems authentic.

Just as there are many variants within the genre of reality TV, not all dream visions are exactly alike. Many dream visions tell the story of a journey through a dream space—for instance, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *House of Fame*—or they relate an interactive dialogue between the dreamer and one or more (usually) allegorical persons, as in Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* or *Pearl*. But two late medieval dream visions, Chaucer’s *The Legend of Good Women* and Christine de Pisan’s *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*, focus on recreating the past in order to inform the present—just like the *House* series. In the prologue to both the *Cité* and the *Legend*, the autobiographical narrators confront the issue of the literary tradition. The journey into the dream space is one that results in an injunction to retell the stories of famous women, stories that focus on stereotypes of female behavior. The dream space becomes a compendium of *exempla*, each telling an old story anew. So the dream space holds not just one liminal life (that of the dreamer), but the multiple liminal lives of the women whose stories they tell. Like the participants in the *House* series, the women in these stories are confronted by the rigidities of social stereotypes. Forced to experience and embody the liminal by reliving the past, these women, like the *House* participants, have two choices—adapt or drop out.

In both genres, a problem is posed and a liminal space created to explore the parameters of that problem. It is too anachronistic to state that the dream vision is the reality show of the Middle Ages, but clearly the dream vision serves many of the same purposes of a reality show. Both forms create performative, experimental “other” spaces to contemplate socio-cultural concerns. Here, juxtaposing what seems to be disparate cultural products produces not cognitive dissonance, but rather reveals that the power of rigid social and cultural stereotypes to overwhelm the individual is not a new idea, any more than is the appeal of the liminal past as a way to reconsider such stereotypes.

Living the Televised Liminal

Cultural products reveal something about their audience; at the same time, they appeal to that same audience—so it seems almost too obvious to point out that people watch reality TV because they find it entertaining. But such an observation challenges the level of anxiety expressed among cultural and academic critics over reality TV: What exactly is it? How to define it? How will it impact the audience? What does it mean? Is it harmful?¹⁵ Such anxiety does not seem to pervade reality TV’s audience who continue to watch (or not) each new variant—apparently judging each show’s worth on criteria quite different from that of the critics. Television critic Robert Lloyd notes that the audience never

seems to mistake reality TV shows for documentaries—"the word 'documentary' almost never comes into play in discussing reality TV."¹⁶ Instead, "As long as viewers feel that the game-show reality series are not actually fixed, and continue to be *attracted* or *enjoyably annoyed* by the people on the screen, they will likely stick around."¹⁷

It would appear that the audience of reality TV may be savvier than many critics seem to want to acknowledge, accepting such shows as packaged pseudo-versions of reality. Moreover, they seem to accept the player-actors as real people rather than professionals (even the celebrities are playing "themselves") and that the actual experiences such shows depict lie outside the confines of the "real" world. In particular, what seems most significant, although too little considered, is that the audience adapts to each new variant of the reality show without any rules about how to watch them. What Walter Ong observes of medieval receptive practice is just as applicable to reality TV shows: "Readers over the ages have had to learn this game of literacy, how to conform themselves to the projections of the writers they read, or at least how to operate in terms of these projections. They have to know how to play the game of being a member of an audience that doesn't really 'exist.' And they have to know how to adjust when the rules change even though no rules thus far have ever been published and even though the changes in the unpublished rules are themselves for the most part only implied."¹⁸ It would seem that for its audience, watching a reality TV show is as much a game as is participating in one. Consequently, the question is not whether the audience accepts reality TV as reality, but rather *why* the audience knowingly accepts such virtual reality. Why do they play the game? One answer is that the audience is willing to accept these kinds of shows in order to observe, and even vicariously participate in, the liminal experience.

Certainly, what seems to attract both players and audience to the *House* series is the experience of the liminal. Defined as "experiential history television events," the *House* series attempts to understand the past by recreating it.¹⁹ *1900s House* (2000), the first in the series, places a contemporary English family in a Victorian home and asks them to live according to Victorian rules. *1940s House* (2002) has another English family relive the World War II years, and *Frontier House* (2002) places three American families on the Colorado frontier and over the course of the production asks them to acquire enough supplies to sustain themselves as if they are to endure the coming winter.²⁰ The next three productions purposefully expand beyond the individual domestic sphere to replicate larger communities. *Manor House* (2003) places both masters and servants in an English country home in order to experience the Edwardian class system. *Colonial House* (2004) sets a disparate group of American and British "colonists" on the Maine coast, circa 1628, and asks them to create a profitable colony by the end of production. *Regency House Party* (2004), the first hybrid of the *House* series, combining as it does a love prize, à la *The Bachelor* (ABC), with history, depicts a group of British men and women as they recreate the early-nineteenth-century courtship process.²¹ The latest version, *Texas Ranch House*, aired in May 2006, promised to show the "exhilaration and exhaustion of life in the Old West."²² In all instances, the *House* shows promise the experience of living the past: "What a project! The chance to actually live in the style of a world that no longer exists is a chance of a lifetime."²³

The first part of the liminal, the idea of the journey, is endemic to many reality TV shows whose participants often say the journey was worth it even if they don't win the game, the mate, or the job. In the *House* series, episodes are edited to demonstrate the framework of this experiential journey more so than they are edited to demonstrate a straightforwardly chronological narrative (i.e., a documentary). Typically, the first episode in each individual series introduces the cast to each other and, even more importantly, to their new environment and roles. The cast is shown arriving in period costumes via period transportation—in *Manor House* the participants arrive by car, cart, or foot, depending upon class status, and in *Colonial House* the colonists arrive by ship in order to recreate the colonial experience. The rules and roles of the liminal experience are also explained in this introductory episode. Upon arrival at the manor house, participants are handed an individually detailed rulebook, which is to guide their role-playing throughout the experiment. In *Colonial House*, the cast undergoes two weeks of historical training at Plymouth Plantation in Plymouth, Massachusetts, without any notion of what role they are to play; they are even blindfolded during costume fittings to keep them (literally) in the dark as far as possible.²⁴ In all instances, they (and we) know one another only within their liminal roles. Ensuing episodes depict the conflicts that inevitably arise as each participant confronts the reality of living the past and living with one another.²⁵ Individual *House* episodes are edited around an experiential theme rather than a plot point; for example, the second episode of *Colonial House* is entitled "Harsh Reality" and the fourth episode of *Manor House* is called "Tough Love." The final episode in each series shows the end of the journey (i.e., the project's conclusion) by revealing the participants in their "real" lives.

The second component of the liminal experience is performance. Turner defines such performance as an "act of creative introspection in which 'meaning' is ascribed to the events and parts of [the liminal] experience."²⁶ This idea of performance as creative introspection is a useful way to understand a standard convention of the reality genre, the taped confessional monologues in which individual players attempt to articulate and understand their experience. In fact, it seems as if most reality shows are designed to produce just such moments, leading us to ponder what *would* be the appeal of a reality show without the performative confessions of the players? As in all reality shows, *House* players are encouraged to "confess" their thoughts and emotions as they negotiate their new historical "reality." And, as is the case with so many reality shows, the individual players find such narrative confessions essential to their performance of the liminal experience. Consequently a great deal of each individual show's running time is made up of such confessional moments.²⁷ Not only do they drive the dramatic action forward, but these narrative moments allow the audience insight into each individual player's view of his or her "true" self and liminal "performance."

But the individual reality player's performance is more complicated for the *House* players than for the "average" reality show participant (however that may be defined). Like other reality show participants, the players in the *House* series are not paid actors but are hired to play "themselves"; however, they are also assigned a specific historical role. While they must "be" themselves, they must also inhabit their role, and conflict arises almost immediately when the question becomes whether to preference the self or the role: "So there was some conflict

in there with the roles they were assigned because they had to go to this place and live the way it really would have been, which became hugely important and very real so that it affected everything from how hard they had to work to what personal choices and personal freedoms they had.”²⁸

Such an emphasis on narrative performance also points to the didactic function of liminality: what is the valuable lesson learned by the player, and by implication, the viewer? The collective lesson derived by the individual players of the *House* series as they actually experience the performance of the liminal is that they cannot experiment with or move beyond the liminal space’s rules. As a *Manor House* producer explains, “At the start of the project they were more inclined to behave as modern day people, and rebel against the system, but as time drew on they adjusted to it.”²⁹ Because all of the shows in the *House* series create a structured liminality quite different from its inhabitants’ true “reality,” players are forced to experience and adapt to this other reality.³⁰

What the *House* shows seem to promise both participants and viewers is an authentic experience of the past as real, embodied history. Yet such an authentic historical experience is all but impossible. Instead, what such situations make clear is that what we, individually and/or collectively, have always assumed to be natural or normal is no such thing—rather, as Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, would say, such norms are the product of the structures we inhabit. Bourdieu views the world as series of structures that he calls fields, including the social, economic, educational, political, and cultural fields, among others. We participate in those fields via what he calls *habitus*.³¹ For Bourdieu, *habitus* is the very knowledge into which we are born, and which is then reinforced by family, education, and society into our very being. The result is that once we are placed in a different milieu that requires a different *habitus*, then the ability to act with any sense of ease will be lacking since, after all, we are lacking the *habitus* necessary to function within the new field. This is why Bourdieu argues that *habitus* is our own embodied history: that is, we are the roles we inhabit because we do indeed inhabit them as they also inhabit us. In Bourdieu’s words, our notions of how to be in the world, our *habitus*, is “internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history.”³² Anyone who has traveled to a foreign country, stayed with someone else’s relatives, or simply started a new job will be familiar with this idea that a set of assumptions and ingrained behaviors underlies our everyday life, coming to light only when the everyday is changed.

So a central theme underlying the *House* series is how an individual copes once his or her context, or field, is changed. As series producer Luis Barreto observes, “Taking people out of their comfortable surroundings and placing them in an unfamiliar and taxing environment is at the heart of this series. . . . Unlike other unscripted shows out there today, we’re not looking to humiliate or embarrass anyone. It’s all about the experience and how one deals with the situation at hand.”³³ One of the underlying precepts of this liminal reality is the experience of difference—difference between the then and the now, difference between one’s own reality and the new reality to be performed. Whereas all of the shows in the *House* series have placed participants in a past that is far more restrictive than the present, the later entries have specifically attempted to recreate structured communities that are quite different from contemporary American and British society.³⁴ *Manor House* forces a disparate group of contemporary strangers to recreate

the social structures and strictures of a class-defined Edwardian community. This version of the reenacted historical past encompasses an unfamiliar and rigid hierarchy where, as *Manor House's* tagline puts it, "There's a place for everyone.... And everyone better know their place."

Manor House depicts a wealthy English family and their servants in their English country home, Manderston, over the years 1905–11. The Olliff-Coopers—husband John, wife Anna, two sons Jonathan and Guy, as well as Mrs. Olliff-Cooper's unmarried sister, Avril Anson—play the role of upstairs family. There is a staff of thirteen downstairs to serve them. The head of the downstairs servants is Mr. Edgar, the butler; along with Mrs. Davies the housekeeper, he serves as conduit between upstairs and downstairs. Other servants who negotiate both worlds include Miss Morrison, the lady's maid; Monsieur Dubiard, the chef; and Mr. Raj-Singh, the tutor.³⁵ There are two housemaids (who are eventually joined by another housemaid due to the workload), two footmen, a kitchen maid, a scullery maid, a groom, and a hall boy (so named because he sleeps, literally, in the hall).³⁶ All are given extensive sets of rules to follow, both individual and hierarchical.

It should not be surprising that the only people who are truly happy with (or in) this experiment are those on the upper end of their respective hierarchies. A business owner in his real life, Sir John immediately embraces his role and is soon shooting game and smoking cigars with his port. Lady Olliff-Cooper, an emergency room doctor outside the show, quickly adapts to her position, aided in large part by the rigid social rules, corsets, and costume changes. But her sister, Miss Anson, begins to suffer the symptoms of hysteria and is sent away to "take the waters." The servants fall into place like characters from an Edwardian novel and behave according to type: the butler is stern but kind; the housekeeper is matronly; the tutor is lonely and misunderstood; the French chef is persnickety; two scullery maids run away; a secret romance develops between the hall boy and the (third) scullery maid. All is as it should be in this Edwardian dream; Lady Olliff-Cooper calls it a "glittering golden bubble."³⁷ The metaphor of a bubble is an apt one for the liminal life. Whether that bubble is a glittering, golden one, however, seems to depend upon one's assigned role. Those participants who truly enjoy the bubble of Edwardian life tend to be at the upper end of their respective hierarchy, whereas those at the bottom or in the most marginalized positions are the unhappiest and struggle against their restraints the most.

Sir and Lady Olliff-Cooper quickly become at ease in their liminal roles. According to Sir John Olliff-Cooper, "When I told my friends that I'd been selected to become an Edwardian, they took great delight in telling me that I'd always been one. They assure me now that they meant it as a compliment. They may have been right, because I dropped happily and naturally into Manor House life."³⁸ Indeed, Sir John becomes the pompous, myopic ruler that his role not only requires, but encourages. Kept unaware of most of the mechanical workings of the house—as, according to the rules, he should be—Sir John does, nevertheless, try to make amends when made aware of domestic problems. Once he realizes how short-staffed the downstairs servants are, he orders the hiring of an additional housemaid and a replacement scullery maid; he attempts to reincorporate the marginalized tutor back into the household after a falling out, insisting that "nobody must be allowed to be left out"; and he suggests a servants' ball at

the end of the experiment to thank the staff for their hard work.³⁹ However, his claims that he is actually a sensitive person who does understand and care for the servants is not a claim that they believe; this is made clear when he fails to recognize his own image in the Guy Fawkes effigy burnt at the conclusion of the servants' ball.

At first, Lady Olliff-Cooper has a difficult time with the lack of contact with her sons, admitting at one point that in the past it must have been easy to send one's sons off to boarding school as one had almost no contact with one's children. In one deleted confessional, she realizes just how constricted her life is, literally, when she borrows her unmarried sister's blouse and discovers that her sister is allowed to move her arms more freely. Lady Olliff-Cooper breaks down when she realizes that she—and by inference all Edwardian ladies—will be unable to hug her own sons. But although she is initially troubled, Lady Olliff-Cooper quickly adapts and soon her reactions are ones of enjoyment and pleasure; she feels coddled and pampered by the attentive care of the servants. By the project's conclusion, she observes: "I could have stayed there forever, and would in time have come to think of my twenty-first-century life as some curious and highly unlikely, futuristic dream. . . . I was living the life of a very wealthy, respected aristocrat. It was like existing in the centre of a glittering golden bubble. It's hard to let that go."⁴⁰ In fact, both she and her husband are stunned in the final days to discover the resentment of their servants.

Those servants who are at the top of their hierarchy—Mr. Edgar, the butler, Mrs. Davies, the housekeeper, Miss Morrison, the lady's maid, and Monsieur Dubiard, the chef—seem to best understand their performative role. And certainly, the whole experiment would have failed if they had not upheld those roles. Mr. Edgar is the heart of the house, and of the show, probably because he is the one who has contact with every member of the house. He begins the experiment by strictly enforcing the rules. However, the lower staff has a difficult time adjusting to the rigid etiquette of the period, particularly to the "no speaking at the dining table" rule. Soon, Mr. Edgar relaxes some of the standards, in large part to allow the household to function more smoothly. Unfortunately, the first night that the servants are allowed to imbibe alcohol leads to hangovers for Charlie, the first footman, and Kenny, the hall boy. The next day is the first formal dinner being held at Manderston, but with every hand needed to help the understaffed servants and chef put on such an elaborate display, Charlie and Kenny are nowhere to be found. When Mr. Edgar finally discovers them, at lunchtime, huddled and asleep on the grounds, he is crushed by their disloyalty. He arrives at one conclusion, "Discipline, Discipline, Discipline."⁴¹ Yet this is a conclusion that must be constantly tempered. Both Mr. Edgar and Mrs. Davies turn a blind eye to the romance of Ellen, the third scullery maid, and Kenny. In an Edwardian home, Ellen would have been dismissed without references, but this household cannot withstand the loss of a third scullery maid. In fact, the only time that Ellen and Kenny are reprimanded is when their behavior affects the other servants' workloads.

But the upper servants also have their moments of internal conflict. Miss Morrison, the lady's maid, spends most of her time with Lady Olliff-Cooper, who requires up to six costume changes a day. Their relationship is a good one, but the night before the costumed Empire Ball, Morrison breaks the rules

and secretly tries on Lady Olliff-Cooper's ball gown. In her confessional, she admits that she has finally had enough of making beautiful items for everyone but herself. Mr. Edgar has a moment of deep hurt one night when Sir John insults him publicly in front of the dinner guests. In his confessional, Mr. Edgar is near tears over what he sees as Sir John's betrayal.

It is the chef, Monsieur Dubiard, who could be said to take the experiment most rigorously, viewing the experience as a way to create authentic Edwardian cuisine. However, his desire to stay true to the liminal life is quickly tested by all around him. When the shortage of help in the servants' hall impacts his ability to cook, he finally has had enough and does the unthinkable: he goes directly to Lady Olliff-Cooper, bringing her downstairs to the kitchen to show her the untenable conditions. Despite the addition of a permanent scullery maid, Monsieur Dubiard is shown working around the clock even when the other servants take time off. But his true disgust is saved for his master, Sir John. After the Olliff-Coopers are served a roasted pig's head as dinner, Sir John requests lighter, less authentically Edwardian, cuisine. Monsieur is appalled at what he sees as an unacceptable qualification of the rules. His disgust for his employer never really lessens over the course of the experiment, and by the time of the servants' ball, he has months of anger to express. So he attends the ball with one objective: to confront Sir John. It does not go well—not merely because such confrontation is against the rules, but because Sir John does not really pay attention to him or his concerns. As the other servants intervene to end the confrontation, Dubiard stalks off, still disgusted by Sir John's lack of commitment to the authentically historical. Dubiard's behavior is liminally authentic and, probably, historically accurate. As an accomplished, classically trained chef, his unique position and skill allow him actions and expressions not possible for others in the hierarchy. And notably, he is the only participant in *Manor House* whose post-filming interview indicates that he would return in a heartbeat.

Those at the bottom of their respective hierarchies are the most powerless. The lower servants in the *Manor House* hierarchy—footmen, housemaids, kitchen maid, scullery maid, and hallboy—are often overwhelmed as much by the sheer volume of work as by the restrictive rules. For instance, there is so much protest over her workload by the second scullery maid that the first footman proposes a job swap, a very contemporary approach to labor relations. However, this only results in a very tired footman, and a scullery maid who continues to complain; such an “enlightened” approach proves useless against a lack of modern conveniences and autonomy. In the end, as she and we are reminded, she is a scullery maid and is bound by the parameters of her role. There is also much unrest throughout the series over the issue of days off—for instance, there is not a single day off for the downstairs staff in the first four weeks. Eventually, conflicts over the divisions of labor are resolved by the addition of a third housemaid and a permanent scullery maid. But throughout their time at Manderston, the servants work six days a week, sixteen or more hours a day.

Understandably, resentment against the “masters” develops quickly. Because there is no interaction allowed between servant and master, there is no room for communication, friendship, or understanding to develop. As Mr. Edgar observes, “hierarchy and discipline work up to a point but what one loses is communication. The family are divorced from the servants. And that's

terrible . . . you don't feel you can speak the truth."⁴² This is obvious to us in the audience as we are privy to so many confessional moments that lay bare the emotions stewing under the Edwardian hierarchy. However, it is not always so obvious to those living within the liminal. Lady Olliff-Cooper notes, "An Edwardian lady would not be expected even to know the names of lower servants, certainly not to speak to them, so regrettably I didn't get to know the other members of the household, except from afar."⁴³ In fact, it is six weeks before she even goes downstairs (at Monsieur Dubiard's instigation) and even then sees only the kitchen. Meanwhile, Sir John will neither see the downstairs nor meet some of his own servants until the servants' ball. At this ball, a carnivalesque affair where the servants eat catered food from the family's china and are freed from an evening's work, the servants are visibly unhappy when Mr. Edgar announces that he is inviting the family. So they decide to make their displeasure known by using the Guy Fawkes effigy as a stand-in for their master. But this structural conflict does have a positive side as a profound camaraderie and community develops among all the servants. Their very powerlessness draws them together into a working unit, almost a family.

The unhappiness of those inhabiting restrictive positions is a running theme throughout all the *House* shows, but *Manor House* demonstrates that it is those who are marginalized, even more than the powerless, who are the most unhappy. The two individuals who are assigned the most tenuous positions on the bottom rung of the "Upstairs" division, the unmarried sister and the tutor, are the most conflicted of all the *Manor House* participants. As the spinster sister of Lady Olliff-Cooper, Miss Anson is at the bottom of the Olliff-Cooper hierarchy. She has no power but, more significantly, she has no place in the hierarchy. Etiquette demands that she always comes last in the family train. She is assigned lower-level servants to serve her. She is not allowed to do anything unless it is approved by her brother-in-law, Sir John. Her only outlets for individuality and freedom are horseback riding and bicycle riding. Mr. Edgar observes that she has a "half-lived life—how very, very Edwardian."⁴⁴ A microbiology professor and consultant in her real life, Miss Anson reacts as did many Victorian and Edwardian women in her position: she develops the symptoms of depression and retires to her bed. The doctor (a medical historian) is called in and prescribes a rest cure; in reality, this cure takes the form of leaving the show, and she returns only for the end of the experiment. As Miss Morrison comments, "Miss Anson has been a victim of sticking to the rules. And she has been a true Edwardian lady and she's paid the price for that."⁴⁵ Miss Anson quite literally can't take it; as is the case with many conflicted *House* participants, the only solution is to leave. Asked if she would do the experiment again, she is adamant: "If all the circumstances were identical—there is no way you would get me back."⁴⁶ Indeed, the viewer can sense the relish with which Dr. Anson, returned to her real life in the series' conclusion, climbs into her red convertible and drives off into her future.

The tutor, Mr. Raj-Singh, is isolated for different reasons. He does not eat or socialize with the servants, ostracizing him from their social world, but neither is he a gentleman even though he lives and works upstairs, eating and socializing with the Olliff-Cooper family. The daily morning prayer session finds him firmly on the upstairs side of the two lines formed in the front hallway. But he actually spends most of his time with his pupil, ten-year-old

Master Guy. As Mr. Raj-Singh points out, spending all one's time with a young child is isolating and often tedious. Furthermore, Master Guy is free to roam between upstairs and down, but Mr. Raj-Singh has clear rules about such behavior. Since he takes his role of upstairs servant seriously, he does not participate in the lower servants' realm or social lives. In fact, he mainly uses the servants as servants, understandably leading to a disgruntled and angry reaction on their part. In his position in the hierarchy, he has no friends other than Miss Anson. Her absence leaves him completely isolated, and his joy and relief at her return is evident. Eventually, he too rebels by refusing to take care of his charge on the night of the Olliff-Coopers' anniversary; however, this only succeeds in finally turning everyone in the house against him. To complicate his position further, as an East Asian, he is the only minority in the household. When he is asked to arrange for an Indian dance troupe to visit and perform at a special dinner celebrating the Raj (i.e., Sir John's plan to reincorporate him into the household), he is deeply insulted when they are forced to enter the house through the servants' entrance. Meanwhile, he enrages Mr. Edgar and the footmen when he answers inquiries from the Indian dinner guests as his "real" self rather than from within his liminal role. Mr. Edgar is deeply angered by what he views as the insult to Sir John while the footmen are angered by his implications of racism. Eventually, Mr. Raj-Singh makes a formal apology to Charlie, the first footman; Charlie is clearly gratified by the apology, but states in his confessional that he still doesn't know where he stands on the "Mr. Raj-Singh situation."⁴⁷ From Mr. Raj-Singh's perspective, however, the rules governing his odd position have made it impossible for him to fit in anywhere, and in one confession he asserts his sympathy with Jane Eyre and all other tutors and governesses who came before him. His final conclusion is that "you need people in your life."⁴⁸ Both Miss Anson and Mr. Raj-Singh demonstrate that one of the most powerful aspects of living the liminal life is the feeling of belonging to the liminal community, without which one's identity, both "real" and virtual," becomes unmoored.

One of the fascinations of *Manor House* is watching the dynamic that exists between the impossibilities of experiencing the historical past versus the power of living in the liminal. It would seem that rather than looking for the historically authentic in the *House* series, we should focus on what the authentically liminal reveals. Significantly, all of the *House* shows demonstrate this profound sense of community. As well, 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 contemporary individual. Once placed within a rigid hierarchy, and bound by its rules and restrictions, most participants will, if not *become* the allotted role, at least perform it. Just as our forebears did. As Mr. Edgar concludes: "One of the things I learnt in the house was that it developed its own dynamic. . . . 'Time Off' became a burning issue, and it even[tually] bubbled over to the point of rebellion by the ranks of the middle and junior staff. The most interesting aspect of this situation was that in the historic period we were re-enacting the same thing had taken place, as documentary sources from the period demonstrate. The lesson here was that history was genuinely repeating itself, given the same set of social and environmental circumstances."⁴⁹ Whether history was "genuinely" repeating itself is arguable, but it is evident

throughout the *House* series that once contemporary participants are confronted with rigid hierarchies and stereotypes, most perform liminally in ways markedly similar to those who played those roles authentically in the past.

Living the Liminal Dream

At first glance it may seem as if late medieval dream visions like Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* and Christine de Pisan's *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* bear little resemblance to contemporary televised attempts to recreate the past; however, they also prove to be liminal spaces that contemplate societal stereotypes and strictures by revisiting the past. But such connections tend to be overlooked if we pose the question too glibly, asking what could the medieval dream vision and reality TV possibly have in common? One assumption that underlies this question, and that keeps us from seeing connections between the pre- and postmodern, is our teleological desire to see ourselves as "better than" our predecessors—an assumption that tends to go hand in hand with a desire to see ourselves as "other than" the past. If we can posit the medieval as dark, nasty, and brutish, well then (clearly!) we are the opposite. This is a central appeal, as well, of many a reality TV series that allows the audience to see itself as both better, and other than, the "real" people populating a particular historical "reality." But such a demarcation between the medieval and the postmodern limits our ability to see ourselves clearly just as it limits our ability to understand the past and its long reach into the future. Another assumption, that some cultural products are highbrow and others lowbrow, further limits our ability to see connections across texts, across genres, and across historical periods.

Rather than ask how could the medieval dream vision and the reality show be compared, we should ask, how could they not? Nick Gillespie, the editor-in-chief of *Reason* magazine, uses the term "perpetual meaning machine" to describe the energy of culture, pop culture in particular: "Pop culture is constantly riffing off itself in new and different ways. It's a venue in which all sorts of social, cultural, and aesthetic conventions are examined, challenged, reformulated, and often ignored altogether.... Pop culture is a forum for glorious mongrelization and wild synthesis—a place where borders are crossed in all sorts of different and interesting ways."⁵⁰ While such a description of cultural volatility seems apropos of the contemporary reality show, it is also quite a good description of the strange amalgam that is a medieval dream vision. As Peter Brown similarly observes in his essay about the borders of dream visions, "Dreams by their very nature are able to express a sense of fragmentation, a loss of continuity between the self and the outer world since they operate through striking juxtaposition, distortion, displacement, condensation, and apparent incoherence."⁵¹

The borders of a dream vision are those of a frame narrative: prologue, the dream itself, and, typically, a return to the pre-dream situation. Initially, the dreamer is anxious, challenged by some psychological conflict or existential question that will, in turn, be addressed within the dream. Entry into the dream itself signals a "state of altered consciousness" on the part of its narrator, a state that allows for both the performance and the consideration of internal and external realities.⁵² Strange events occur within the dream context, which seem to be normal, but are outside the ordinary, everyday world of the dreamer (anyone who has

experienced a dream will recognize the seeming normality of the dream world). The performance of the dream's journey produces self-reflection as well as contemplation of larger issues: "The dream makes possible perceptions which, while anchored in the dreamer's spiritual self, are also moral, social, and political."⁵³ And once the dreamer awakens, his or her memory of the dream serves as a link between past, present and future for both dreamer and reader.

Like the reality show, the rules of a dream vision create its liminal space. The prologue of a dream vision introduces the narrator and whatever issue is vexing the narrator. Both the *Legend* and the *Cité* introduce an autobiographical narrator at work in the quiet of a study, and who is contemplating the literary past, the tradition of literary thought that has come before. While Chaucer's narrator, "Chaucer," is considering the difference between knowledge and experience, Christine's narrator, "Christine," is brought to an emotional impasse by the sheer dint of antifeminist venom. The transition into the dream world is one that is clearly marked within the narrative. The *Cité* and the *Legend* follow similar patterns: Chaucer falls asleep as he is "worshipping" a daisy in a May meadow while a tearful Christine lays her head, in shame, upon her chair's armrest. In both of these instances, the dream proper begins with the entrance of the divine entities who control the dream space. Chaucer interrupts the God of Love (Cupid) and his wife, Alceste, while Christine is visited by a divine female trio—*Raison* (Reason), *Droiture* (Rectitude), and *Justice* (Justice). Both sets of divine entities command their respective narrator to retell stories from the past, providing clear-cut rules for the enactment of this command. In the *Legend*, Alceste and the God of Love sentence Chaucer to write his stories in praise of good women, specifically "good woymmen, maydenes and wives / That weren trewe in lovyng al hire lyves" (F 484–85; G 474–75).⁵⁴ In the *Cité*, *Raison*, *Rectitude*, and *Justice* command Christine to use her "*truëlle de ta plume*" (676) [trowel of her pen (38)] and "*mortier ou comat*" (786) [mortar of her ink bottle (99)] to write her stories, revising the misogyny of the literary past as she does.

The telling of these tales constitutes the dream space. Like the *House* series, these dream "journeys" are liminal spaces that allow for the performative testing of social constructs and stereotypes. The liminal experience is created by the use of a common medieval rhetorical trope, the literary *exemplum*. The *exemplum* retells the literary past, rewriting and revising (as necessary) classical, mythological, biblical, and other stories in order to make clear a moral example. Here, the liminal is performed and experienced within each *exemplum*. These stories present a version of the past, not historically accurate but liminally authentic—a version of the past that creates the bridge for the narrator and the reader to cross into the liminal experience.

The *Legend's* liminal experience consists of a series of stories, all following Alceste's stereotypical rules of female goodness. The Chaucerian narrator crams the women into the narrow confines of the medieval "good woman"—true, steadfast and faithful always—confines that cannot contain any real complexity for the women or for their stories (just as many reality show writers, editors, and directors try to squeeze their players into clear-cut stereotypes). Like so many of the *House* participants, they can't negotiate around these rules; however, they don't have the option of leaving the liminal. These *exempla* illustrate that given such a restricting and confining definition of "good," there is only one way

for the story to play out: in the end, all the women who play the game by the rules wind up dead or abandoned.

The first story, about Cleopatra, sets up the pattern for the rest. Each of the women is depicted as "trew in lovyng al hire lyves" because each feels she has made some sort of contract with her beloved (F 484–85; G 474–75). Regardless of the beloved's behavior, each woman remains steadfastly loyal to the beloved and, especially, to their contract. These liminal lives demonstrate the consequences for women who maintain such loyalty to a rigidly stereotypical ideal. So Cleopatra sees her marriage to Antony as an ethical contract, stating "in myself this covaunant made I tho" (688). As she is Antony's wife, Cleopatra has agreed to experience all that her husband does for "wel or woe, carol or daunce . . . That ryght swich as ye felten, wel or wo . . . The same wolde I fele, lyf or death" (687–92). She concludes "thilke covenant whil me lasteth breth / I wol fulfull" (693–94).

She will follow the rules to their logical conclusion, her own death, in order to fulfill her constant promise to be "unreprovable unto my wyfhood ay" (687). At the first crisis, the failed sea battle, Antony flees, leaving Cleopatra behind. So Cleopatra, Antony's second wife (who, the reader is reminded, "that coude of Cesar have no grace" [663]), is left to fend for herself just as his first wife was. Yet her response to his suicide (which can certainly be construed as another moment of abandonment of her and of their contract) is to build an elaborate shrine to house Antony's "cors embaume"; next to this shrine is the snake-filled pit into which a naked Cleopatra jumps. And all this is to show "that [it] shal be sene, / Was nevere unto hir love a trewer quene" (694–95). Antony is quite clearly depicted as not being worth all of this devotion; the narrator's summation of him, "Ye men that falsly sweren many an oth / That ye wol deye if that youre love be wroth, / Here may ye sen of wemen which a trouthe" (666–69), stands in sharp contrast to Cleopatra's plea that "[y]e nere oute of myn herte's remembrance" (686). But within the strict parameters laid down by Alceste, this is the only way for the story to be performed.

Dido's story follows much the same pattern. When Aeneas announces his departure, Dido argues, "have ye nat sworn to wyve me to take? / Allas, what woman wole you of me make? / I am a gentil woman and a queen. / Ye wole nat from youre wif thus foule fleen" (1304–07). She further calls upon their covenant and her role as constant wife saying, "so ye wole me now to wive take, / As ye had sworn, thanne wol I yeve yow leve / To slen me with youre swerd now sone at eve! / For thanne yit shal I deyen as youre wif" (1319–22). Moreover, Chaucer here follows Ovid by citing Dido's pregnancy, increasing the pathos of Dido's situation and the perfidy of Aeneas: "I am with childe, and yeve my child his lyf! / Mercy, lord! Have pite in your thought!" (1323–24). But in the end, Aeneas leaves as a "traytour" and thus "he hath laft Dido in wo and pyne" (1328 and 1330). The final image of the tale is yet another pathetic pose: Dido clings to a cloth that Aeneas left behind, kissing it and speaking to it: "O swete cloth, whil Juppiter it lest / Tak now my soule, unbynd me of this unreste! / I have fulfild of fortune at the cours" (1338–40). Only then does Dido kill herself: "Upon the fir of sacrifice she sterte, / And with his sword she rof hyre to the herte" (1350–51). Like the final image of Cleopatra leaping naked into the snake pit, this moment has a lurid, visceral impact.

The "Legend of Ariadne" begins with the brief paradigmatic tale of Scylla. Scylla falls in love with Minos, the enemy of her father, Nisus. Like Cleopatra, Scylla "caste hire herte" when she falls in love with Minos (1911). However, once he has captured Alcothoe, Minos abandons Scylla: "But wickedly he quitte hire kyndenesse, / And let hire drenche in sorwe and distresse" (1918–19). Moreover, the story of Ariadne is typical of many of the legends in that her "pite" for Theseus instigates her love: "they [both Ariadne and Phaedra] hadde compas-sioun . . . thoughte hem gret pite" (1974–76). When Ariadne meets Theseus she further declares, "To ben my servaunt in so low degree, / God shilde it, for the shame of wemen alle" (2081–82). Already her actions are driven both by "pite" and by her stereotypical notions of female behavior.

Ariadne, too, enters into a marriage contract. In order to enact her rescue plan, she advises him, "Yit were it betere that I were youre wyf" (2089). After Theseus agrees to this contract and declares his undying loyalty to her, Ariadne "smyleth at his stedefastnesse" (2123). Ariadne sees this contract as so important, she declares, "As evere of gentil women is the wone / To save a gentyl man, emforth her might, / In honest cause, and namely in his right. / Me thinketh no wight ought us herof blame, / Ne beren us therefore an evil name" (2131–35)—in essence, the credo of all the women in the *Legend* and the blueprint of the narrator's task. With their "couvenant" (2138) set and her stereotypically correct fidelity established, Ariadne aids Theseus by betraying her father. However, once abandoned by Theseus, she realizes that "Allas! Where shal I, wreche wight, become? / For thogh so be that ship or boot here come, / Hom to my contre dar I nat for drede. / I can myselven in this cas nat rede" (2214–17). Such faithful constancy to her "husband" has paradoxically led to disloyal behavior toward her father, her country, and her self, as it did Scylla, Dido, and Cleopatra before her.

The remaining stories of the *Legend* follow the same pattern. Whether or not they are legally wed, the women see themselves as involved in a covenant of some sort with their beloved. Each woman believes that she must remain faithful to this covenant regardless of another's actions or betrayals, even if that other is the very man with whom she has made the pact. Rather than see male betrayal as the end of their pact, the women continue to hold true to the rules. In fact, despite the inevitable betrayal and their own pitiful circumstances of abandonment and disgrace, the women—to the narrator's and often the readers' disgust—remain constant to this covenant beyond all sense of reason. Dido asks, "haue ye not sworn to wife me to take? / Allas, what woman wol ye of me make? . . . Ye wol not fro your wife thus foul flee!" (1304–07). Upon seeing Theseus's ship sailing away, Ariadne cries "O turn agayn, for reuth and syn, / Thy barge hath nat al his meyne in" (2200–01). In most cases, they abase themselves even further. Dido begs Aeneas not to leave: "she kneleth, crieth . . . profereth hym to be / His thral, his servaunt in the leste degree; / She falleth him to fote and swoneth there . . . and seith, have mercy, lat me with you ride . . . and so ye wol me now to wife take . . . for yit shall I dyen your wife" (1311–22). Ariadne waves a "coverchef on a pole" at the departing ship to call Theseus back. She then falls to the ground and kisses his footprints, "kissed in al hire care, / The steppes of his fet ther he hath fare" (2208–09). Finally, in a moment similar to Dido's speech to the cloth, she addresses their bed, "Thow bed . . . that hast recyved two, / Thow shalt answere of tow, and nat of oon! / Where is thy gretter part away ygon?"

(2211–12). Each woman is destroyed by the very constancy to which she is so loyal.

Within the larger context of the *Legend*, such adherence to the stereotypes of goodness and constancy seems foolish at best. Throughout the tales, the narrator depicts the women as “sely,” asking the question that many contemporary readers have as this litany continues, “O sely women ful of innocence, / Ful of pytee, of trewth and concience, / What maketh you to trusten so?” (1254–55). But one purpose of the liminal is to create insights for the future. The dream prologue has set up the question of knowledge versus experience; the use of the liminal allows Chaucer to enact this dichotomy through performative experience. As these women perform the liminal, adherence to stereotypical rules dictates that they remain true, despite torture, torment, and, most especially, their beloved’s betrayal. So the last tale is like the first. Hypermenstra, as have all the women who came before her, remains loyal to her own “feyth,” believing that it is better to be constant to her constancy, even if it leads to death, than to remain alive yet guilty of betraying the *ideal* of constancy: “Syn I am his wif / And hath my feyth, yit is bet for me / For to be ded in wify honeste / Than ben a traytour lyvyng in my shame” (2699–703). That is, she is better off dead than inconstant.

The liminal performance of these stories seems to demonstrate that the logical consequence of following the rules unthinkingly is self-destruction. There is no other way out in these stories. Despite the fact that many of the legend’s women are powerful rulers, following the rules seems to make them powerless. Moreover, they are isolated within their relationships and within their communities. Chaucer’s *Legend* creates a liminal space that demonstrates the veritable impossibility of stereotypes, ending (actually just petering out) in a kind of negative entropy, its women subsumed by their adherence to stereotypical demands. The Chaucerian narrator himself reminds us just before the inconclusive ending to Hypermenstra’s tale, in her words: “Be as be may, for ernest or for game / He shal awake and ryse, and gon on his way” (2073–74). Though Hypermenstra’s words here refer to her lover Lyno, they can also be seen as part of the ending of the larger frame: the dreamer and the reader will awake and go on their way without resolution.

In so many ways, these legends of alienation, powerlessness, and marginalization seem similar to those of the unhappy scullery maids, Miss Avril Anson, Mr. Raj-Singh, or any of the other *House* participants trapped by their new rules and reality. As Peter Brown observes, “A dream is . . . well suited to the representation and analysis of alienation, of a sense of lost authority, or of a searching for connections that have become hidden, tenuous or problematic.”⁵⁵ Here, the liminal experience reveals that a constant adherence to stereotypical rules denies the complexity of lived experience, leading to destruction at worst, a half-lived life at best.

But contrasting Chaucer’s liminal space to Christine’s proves instructive. Where Chaucer shows the destructive forces of powerlessness, marginalization, and isolation, Christine shows the reverse. She uses the liminal dream to create a space, her city of ladies, peopled with the reformed *exempla* that embody her community. Christine’s dream experience begins with Dame Raison’s words: “Or te reviens a toy meismes, reprens ton scens et plus ne te troubles pour telz fanffelues” (625) [Come back to yourself, recover your senses, and do not trouble yourself

anymore over such absurdities (8)]. Her dream space prompts a return to the self rather than a movement away; as Brown reminds us of the dream vision, “the dream which by definition always has the dreamer at its center, allows for a confrontation with the self and its preoccupations such that a process of self-realization may be achieved.”⁵⁶ The female trinity will help her to recover her senses, to come back to her self, by guiding her to use her stories to build and people a city of “*bonnes pruedesfemes*” (816) [women of good character (117)]. In Turner’s terminology, Christine uses the liminal in order to create a cultural insight for the future, a “back to the future” moment that she names the “*nouvel royaume de Femenie*” (815) [New Kingdom of Femininity (17)].

The liminal experience in the *Cité* is one of building a city. The trio explains that they have been sent by God to defend women against their foes and to construct a refuge for “*femmes dignes de loz*” (630) [women worthy of praise (11)]. *Raison* accuses antifeminist authorities of misinterpretation, claiming that, in fact, they are the ones who have read and interpreted improperly (“*mesprendre*” (646) [mis-take (20)]). The trio will teach Christine how to interpret the past properly, instructing her to use these newly revised stories to build the foundations, walls, and buildings of a new city, as well as its population. These *exempla* will provide “*heberge honnourable pour demeure perpetuelle tant que le monde durera, vous soit par moy en la dlosture cité establee*” (971) [honorable lodging within city walls as a perpetual residence for as long as the world endures (214–15)]. The performative play within this liminal space requires Christine’s readers to experience her version of cultural distortion, juxtaposition, and revision in order to create insights for the future—just as Turner suggests the liminal other demands “‘living through,’ ‘thinking back’ and ‘willing or wishing forward.’”⁵⁷

Raison begins by explaining that the three have come to remove the “*ordes pierres broçonneuses et noires*” (643) [black, dirty and uneven stones (18)] that block Christine’s troubled mind, replacing them with the “*belles reluysans pierres*” (787) [clean and shining bricks (99)] created by her new stories. Since Book I forms the foundation of the city, these first stories logically correspond to the building blocks of civilization, beginning with illustrations of women’s physical strength and determination as rulers and warriors. This foundational example of Semiramis is a logical one since Semiramis is a city builder herself. But Christine does not depict Semiramis as an incestuous, passionate barbarian, but rather as a woman of great physical and political strength. Semiramis repeatedly undertakes battles to defend her people and expand her kingdom. *Raison* also stresses Semiramis’s measures to rebuild, strengthen, and defend the city of Babylon: “*mais encores plus l’enforca ceste dame de plusieurs deffenses et fist faire autour larges et parfons fosses*” (679) [This lady strengthened the city even more with many defenses and had wide and deep moats dug around it (39)]. Christine emphasizes the bravery, courage, vigor, and strength of Semiramis while omitting any “bad” parts from the literary tradition. Since Christine is using this *exemplum* to fulfill the rules laid down in this liminal space, this and all of the other stories must be played out in such a way as to refute incorrect antifeminist depictions of women. In this instance, the story of Semiramis must demonstrate that women are not weak and unstable. *Raison* concludes the story by telling Christine: “*Mais or est assise la premiere pierre ou fondement de nostre cité. Sy nous convient d’ores en avant asseoir ensuivant pierres a quantité pour avancier nostre ediffice*”

(681) [And now the first stone is set in the foundation of our City. Now we must lay many more stones to advance our edifice (40)].

This first *exemplum* is indicative of those that follow. Each story is told in order to counter-argue an antifeminist depiction by illustrating a particular female strength or quality. The next *exemplum* is about the women of Scythia who found a new nation composed entirely of women. They become known as the Amazons, which *Raison* defines as “*desmamellees*” (682) [breastless ones (41)] since the women remove one of their breasts to enhance their skills as warriors. Many of the stories in this section are violent and dramatic in order to emphasize women’s strength and courage; for example, Thamiris, Queen of the Amazons, is described as throwing the severed head of her enemy, Cyrus of Persia, into a bucket filled with his men’s blood while Queen Penthisles kisses the elaborately prepared corpse of Hector just before her head is split open by the Greeks. The final *exempla* in this section, about Cloelia, continues the theme of women’s audacity. One of a group of Roman virgins held hostage, Cloelia cleverly deceives her guards and escapes, bringing along the other hostages. Although she has never ridden, when Cloelia sees a horse, she immediately captures and masters it, using the horse to ferry the other hostages across a river, one by one. These versions of “good” women could not seem more different from those of Chaucer, or from the Edwardian women of *Manor House*. Yet they fulfill their role in this liminal space, one that, as always, necessitates following the rules.

With the foundation complete, the high walls and buildings of the city become the next stage of construction. Whereas the previous stories emphasized women’s physical accomplishments, these *exempla* demonstrate their intellectual abilities. For instance, Proba, a Roman wife and a Christian, reads the works of the classical poets until she knows them “*en memoire*” (725) [by memory (65)] and fully understands them: “*lesquelz livres et lesquelz dittiez, comme un foiz elle les leust par grant entente de son engin et de sa pensee, et si comme elle se prenoit garde de la signiffiance d’iceulx*” (725) [after she had read these books and poems with profound insight and intelligence and had taken pains in her mind to understand them (65)]. Proba then composes her own literary text by joining together pieces of Virgil’s poems to reveal the history of the Old and New Testament. Other stories include Dido, Ops, and Lavinia, all wise women who are, in addition, dynastic leaders and city builders. Having proved women’s intellectual accomplishments and capabilities, the city’s construction concludes.

To people the city, the focus of the stories shifts from women’s capabilities to women’s actions. The first of these *exempla* is Hypiscrata, so loyal to her husband that she follows him into battle disguised as a man. This liminal life tells the story of her physical transformation from a beautiful and sensual queen to a woman disguised as a warrior:

Et en tel maniere se gouvernoit, celle noble dame par force de grant et loyal amour que le tendreté de son biau corps, jeune et delie et souef nourry, estoit converti si comme en un tres fort et viguerieux chevalier armé. (822)

[Thanks to the force of her strong and loyal love, this noble lady conducted herself so valiantly that her fair and soft body, so young, delicate, and tenderly nourished, was transformed, as it were, into a powerful and vigorous armed knight. (121)]

A series of *exempla* follows to prove the loyalty and faithfulness of wives toward their husbands. Among them are Argia, who elaborately embraces and kisses the decomposing, infested corpse of her husband, and Portia, who commits suicide by eating fiery coals and burning herself to death once she fails to warn her husband, Brutus, about his meeting with Caesar.

While these may seem quite similar to the stories Chaucer told, Christine is very careful to delineate the nuances underlying the ideals of constancy. Her stories range from women who demonstrate proper constancy—such as Leana, who bites off her tongue rather than break silence under torture—to those women, the victims of constant but foolish love, who demonstrate the consequences of acting rashly. For instance, *Droiture* tells the story of Lisabetta who hides the head of her murdered lover in a basil pot and waters it with her tears, and Ghismonda who, given her lover's heart in a goblet, adds poison and commits suicide by drinking the concoction. *Droiture* concludes of these women, “qu trop on amé de grant amour sans varier” (951) [that they loved too much, too deeply and too constantly (202)]. Here, Christine uses her *exempla* to illustrate that even a seeming virtue, such as constancy, can be damaging if taken too far. *Droiture* proclaims that such imprudent constancy will lead to an imprudent conclusion—“*car toujours en est la fin mauvaise a leur grant prejudice et grief en corps, en bien et en honneur et a l'ame, qui plus est*” (952) [for its end is always detrimental and harmful to their bodies, their property, their honor and—most important of all—to their souls (202)].

But where the liminal realm of the *Legend* played out only this negative side of constancy, Christine's liminal realm also includes *exempla* of properly constant women such as Griselda, Florence, Bernabo's wife, and Laena. These *exempla* are some of the longest stories in the *Cité*. In each of these liminal lives, the women remain calm, steadfast, and prudent despite all the trials placed upon them—invariably by a husband and/or a lustful admirer; so of Bernabo's wife Christine writes, “*Adonc congnt la dame la cause de l'ire de son mary, qu'elle n'avoit oncques mais sceue. Mais comme tres prudent et ferme qu'elle estoit, tres saigement le voulst dissimuler jusques en temps et en lieu*” (919) [The lady immediately realized the cause of her husband's anger, which she had never known. But being as prudent as she was, she hid her reaction until the right time and place (182)]. Again this version of the story is quite different from Chaucer's—because the liminal rules are different. Thus Christine's women are able to play out a different sort of liminal life. However, it is important to note that both Chaucer and Christine seem to be making the same point about rigid stereotypical rules: both depict the women who follow such rules as self-destructive.

Even with its buildings constructed and peopled, the divine trio declares that the city itself is still not complete. *Justice* explains to Christine that the city's final purpose is to house its Queen, the Virgin Mary, who is the “*chief du sexe femenin*” (977) [head of the feminine sex (219)]. The Virgin arrives accompanied by her attendants, the female saints and martyrs, “*desquelles les vies sont belles a ouyr, de bon exemple a toute femme sur toute autre sagesce*” (978) [whose fair lives serve as excellent examples for every woman above all other wisdom (219)]. Because of the constancy and strength they demonstrate in their suffering, their stories provide the concluding *exempla* of the city. With its “*palais et les haultes menssions prestes et parees*” (974) [palaces and tall mansions ready and

furnished (217)], this city is hers (the Virgin Mary's) to "*dominee et seigneurie*" (974) [rule and govern (217)]. Finally, once all of the liminal lives have been told, *Justice* turns the city over to Christine, "*parfaite et bien fermee*" (1031) [finished perfectly and well enclosed (254)].

The true culmination of Christine's liminal purpose emerges in the closing address to her female readers; where Chaucer's *Legend* only alludes to the end of the liminal, Christine leaves her reader with final instructions for living *after* the liminal. She envisions this city as a liminal product that can serve as both "*refuge*" (1032) [refuge (254)] and a "*deffense et garde contre voz annemis et assail-lans*" (1032) [defense and guard against your enemies and assailants (254)]. She explains that the city is created from virtue itself; the city is "*si reluysant que toutes vous y povez mirer*" (1032) [so resplendent that you may see yourselves mirrored in it (254)]. This concluding metaphor of mirrored virtue returns us to the initial crisis that prompted the journey into the liminal, only now the liminal product would seem to counterbalance Christine's initial inability to find her own experience "mirrored" in her reading. Furthermore, Christine presumes that the liminal experience of her dream vision has solved the same problem for her readers.

Steven Kruger points to the similarities between a dream vision and the medieval symbol of the mirror: "Medieval mirrors...serve not only to reflect the self, but also to reveal information about the world beyond the self. Similarly, the self-conscious dream poem is not independent of the external reality, or truth, that it attempts to represent. In its self-reflexive moments, dream vision raises not only self-contained formal questions, but also questions how literature grasps and represents real and true entities outside a strictly poetic realm."⁵⁸ The main purpose underlying her liminal product is that Christine sees women as real and true entities, who can think for themselves: "*Dieu...a donné a entedement de femme assez apprehensive de toutes choses entendibles concevoir, congnoistre et retenir*" (762) [God...has granted that the mind of an intelligent woman can conceive, know and retain all perceptible things (86–87)]. Ultimately, Christine advocates that if the lessons of the liminal are used properly, women can expose the wrongs of antifeminist authorities through their wise action: "*Faittes les tous menteurs par monstrier vostre vertu et prouvés mençongeurs ceulx qui vous blasment par bien faire*" (1034–35) [Make liars of them all by showing forth your virtue, and prove their attacks false by acting well (256)]. For Christine, the virtual reality created in this liminal space is one that can be used practically upon reentry into the real world.

Both dream visions use stories from the past as a way to work out the limits of actual experience versus the limits of stereotypical ideals. Where Chaucer's stories illustrate that given such a restricting and confining definition there is only one way for these stories to play out, Christine's stories try to revise and adapt those same rules. As in *Manor House*, the performance of the authentically liminal seems to point to the importance of community, the restrictions of stereotypes, and the variable power of the liminal role to influence the future. Further, Christine's more optimistic vision is not unusual; reality TV shows thrive on the concepts of transformation and self-improvement, whether via love, money, or physical perfection. When viewed alongside each other, all three liminal spaces embody profoundly human experiences of hope, expectation, and fear.

The Appeal of the Liminal Life

Why are we attracted to the liminal, whether modern or medieval, virtual or textual? And what do we take away from it? In order to answer these questions, we need to consider the purpose underlying liminality; unfortunately, it is not the purpose we might be expecting. According to liminal theorists ranging from Victor Turner to Mikhail Bakhtin, while the liminal space allows for the consideration of new ideas, ultimately, the experience of the liminal serves to reinforce rather than to revolutionize cultural norms. In the end, liminality, despite all its strange and playful forms, is essentially a normative experience.

Certainly, once we consider this, it can be seen that “solutions” or lasting changes to the issues raised in any of these spaces are few and far between. In Chaucer’s *Legend*, the women wind up abandoned, bereft, and pitiable. Christine sees her *Cité* as creating a permanent liminal space—however, not only does this solution remain virtual, it is also a solution many contemporary feminists tend to find complicit with the prevailing medieval patriarchies. Meanwhile, the shows in the *House* series end with footage of joyful trips to grocery stores and hotel rooms, or of reunions with loved ones, as participants return to the niceties of the modern world. Sadly, the implication here seems to be that the players return to the now, joining us, the viewers, in our better and more modern world, where in a lovely bit of circular logic, we are supposedly free from the cultural stereotypes or other flaws of the past.

But rather than looking for solutions (or, as some might wish, revolution) in the liminal, we need to understand its necessary function: by allowing for a performative space outside the “real,” the liminal experience enables us to live in the real, to be able to accommodate and refashion our desires for self-determination in relation to its often immovable objects and norms. What the liminal historical experiences of the *House* series, the *Legend*, and the *Cité* provide is not a way back to the past, but back to the future. Liminality allows the space necessary to consider an individual present and future. Significantly, very few *House* cast members view the experience as transformative; the majority says that they are not really all that different from before the experience. Though it was an interesting and enjoyable experience, it didn’t really change their lives—rather, what it did change was their *perception* of their lives. As Mr. Edgar, the *Manor House* butler, observes, “No, I do not believe that participating in *Manor House* . . . changed me. However, like all experiences in our lives they leave an imprint in our psyche, and in that sense this project has been no different as having spent time in a foreign country.”⁵⁹ Jessica, one of the *Manor House* maids, says, in a fairly typical statement, “I haven’t changed as a person, but I do have a greater appreciation for my life and how fortunate I am to live in a century where opportunities are open to both men and women.”⁶⁰ In certain ways, such an outcome shouldn’t be surprising. As Turner suggests, the “rules may frame a liminal performance, but it is the ‘flow’ of individual action and interaction within the liminal frame that generates insights and new meanings which may in turn be incorporated into future performances.”⁶¹ So it is the insight and meaning derived from the liminal that is carried back into the real and its future.

In the liminal experience, the significance of individual action is also inextricably linked to interaction. A predominant theme throughout the *House*

series—and I would argue most reality shows—is this: if liminality reinforces the norm, then it also reinforces the community. Players' afterthoughts and conclusions about the liminal usually focus on how they enjoyed and miss the very profound sense of community they experienced within the liminal. *Colonial House* members set up an e-mail group in order to maintain their community and most of the *Manor House* participants are still in contact. Overall, the majority of participants explain that much of "modern" life, not just its hustle and bustle but its conspicuous consumption and media overload, is no longer appealing. Ironically enough, many of these reality TV participants no longer watch so much TV. Instead, there runs an emphasis throughout the post-show commentaries on spending time with family and friends; this was the most enjoyable part of the experience in the liminal past and is now the most enjoyable part of the normal, everyday present. Invariably, what most of them missed during the experience were not modern and technological conveniences, but the friends and family left behind. This sense of community is endemic to all *House* shows: in many ways, the community is the true "product" of the *House* experience.

The importance of the communal to the liminal experience is also evidenced in the medieval dream vision. One of the most striking aspects of the *Legend* is the lack of community for its women; the image of a woman in pitiful isolation is so redundant that it has to be one of Chaucer's points. On the other hand, there is a clear community created between the Chaucerian narrator and his reader. The narrator's constant comments and asides to the reader draw the reader into a liminal community of readers. Christine's *Cité* is also constructed to create a community of readers: a specifically female audience. Furthermore, Christine thinks that her liminal product can be used by her audience for future reference, providing a virtual community for support and succor where a real community may not exist: as Christine instructs her readers, "*vous soit cause ceste cité d'avoir bonnes meurs et estre vertueuses et humbles*" (1032) [may this city be an occasion for you to conduct yourselves honestly and with integrity and to be all the more virtuous and humble (255)]. Again, this textual community seems to be the real "product" of these liminal dreams.

In all of these instances, the product of the liminal performance is this creation of community—a way of going back to the future through the historical past that teaches us not about history per se, but about ourselves. And clearly, the community is not limited to those within the liminal experiment. Just as the medieval dream vision draws its reader into the liminal community of the text, watching as the player in the reality show performs and experiences the liminal, the viewer too experiences the same liminality and the same community. So it is important not to overlook another result of the liminal experience of a reality TV show: the community created among its viewers. A successful TV show is known as a "watercooler" show; *Good Morning America* (ABC) even runs a regular segment, "Around the Watercooler," to discuss various shows the morning after they air.⁶² The Internet has provided fertile ground for reality TV's fans: websites, bulletin boards, blogs, and e-mail chains are all after-products of such shows. There are ritual viewing parties both private and public; it is common for local news affiliates to send a correspondent to local bars and restaurants to show the crowds watching a reality show's finale. So watching these shows produces a sense of community among those of us who watch and discuss them. Certainly,

much of reality TV has a voyeuristic quality, but it is not necessarily a bread and circuses phenomenon as much as a desire to compare its weirdness to our own lives. Ultimately, I think we watch these shows for our own experience of liminality. And then most of us conclude that our own lives are quite “normal” indeed.

In fact, this examination of the liminal in both medieval and modern culture seems to demonstrate that the liminal *is* one of our norms. Journeys, whether the medieval pilgrimage or the contemporary vacation, the medieval dream vision or modern-day reality TV show, all provide the experience of the liminal. And we use the liminal in order to handle, or “deal with,” the real. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the mayor of New Orleans, Ray Nagin, sent weary first responders to Las Vegas: “after the suicides of two first responders and the desertion of scores of others, [the mayor] hoped to salvage the remaining crews with some R&R.”⁶³ Las Vegas’s contemporaneous marketing slogan, “What Happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas,” seems both ironic and poignant in this context. In fact, a better evocation of the liminal is hard to imagine. In this instance, however, the liminal allows its participants to return to a life, and a future, that is no longer normal.

Notes

Special thanks are due to LeAnne Teruya, whose generous conversations with me over the past two years about liminality and reality TV were instrumental in helping me to shape the argument of this essay.

1. “Casting Call,” *Texas Ranch House*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ranchhouse/index.html>.
2. Christine de Pisan, “The ‘*Livre de la Cité des Dames*’ of Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition,” ed. Maureen Cheney Curnow, 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1975), 2:625. Curnow’s edition, Vol. 2, is the source for all citations from the French *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. The English translation is from Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1982), p. 8. Subsequent references in the text to this work and its translation are indicated by line and page numbers, respectively, in parentheses.
3. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), p. 27. Turner based his theories on studies of indigenous communities, later expanding to performance and theater studies. Turner collaborated throughout the 1970s with Richard Schechner, the founding theorist of contemporary performance theory. Performance theory (as first outlined by Schechner) draws not only on aesthetic and dramatic theory, but also on anthropological theory via Turner and on sociological theory via Erving Goffman. As a result, performance theory is markedly interdisciplinary—unlike reality TV studies—and seems an ideal way to try to understand the phenomenon of reality TV “performance” for both player and audience. See Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988), as well as Turner, *From Ritual to Theater*. For more on performance theory, see Henry Bial, ed., *The Performance Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004) and Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edn. (New York: Routledge, 2004).
4. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 18.
5. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 18.
6. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 27.

7. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 18.
8. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 27.
9. The first cultural critic of game, Johan Huizinga, outlined six components of cultural game, including freedom, separation, limitation, order, rules, and difference. For Huizinga, a game is both a social function and a social construction; and such play has two primary functions, as a "contest for something" and a "representation of something." See his *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950). For game in anthropological studies see Gregory Bateson, "A Metalogue: About Games and Being Serious" and "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1972), pp. 14–20 and pp. 177–93, respectively; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); and Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).
10. "Texas Ranch House FAQs," *Texas Ranch House*, PBS.org, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ranchhouse/faq.html>. The site also notes that "[a] stipend is available to selected participants. . . . Our fee is intended to compensate for the loss of earnings the average family or person is likely to incur."
11. It is vital to note that *all* reality shows trade in the valuable commodity of celebrity; we can never forget that the act of appearing on TV is a goal in and of itself. The *House* producers are wary of such goals, however; Beth Hoppe, executive producer of *Colonial House*, explains the difficulty of "finding people who really want to go through it for the right reasons, which to us is always that they have something that they want to explore in history, that they don't just want to be on television"; "Interview with the Executive Producer," *Behind the Scenes, Colonial House*, PBS.org, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/behind/answer6.html>.
12. Never mind the cameras, microphones, confessional cameras, and producers that must also detract from an authentically historical experience.
13. Peter Brown, "On the Borders of the Middle English Dream Visions," in *Reading Dreams: The Interpretations of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 25 [22–50]. In this essay, Brown also touches briefly on Turner's theory of the liminal as one way to historicize the late medieval dream, but Brown focuses on Turner's interpretation of the pilgrimage as liminal, as opposed to my focus on the idea of a liminal space.
14. Steven Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 129. In addition to Kruger and Brown, see also A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), and Kathryn Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy and Literary Form* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).
15. See John Corner, "What Can We Say about 'Documentary'?" *Media, Culture & Society* 22 (2000): 681–88, and "Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions," *Television and New Media* 3 (2002): 255–69; Sam Brenton and Reuben Cohen, *Shooting People: Adventures in Reality TV* (London: Verso, 2003); Richard Kilborn, *Staging the Real: Factual TV Programming in the Age of Big Brother* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 255–69; Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); Susan Holmes and Deborah Jermyn, *Understanding Reality Television* (New York: Routledge, 2004), especially pp. 1–8; and Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).
16. "Ask the Critic: Robert Lloyd," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 July 2005: E55. See also Corner's idea of "postdocumentary culture" in "What Can We Say about 'Documentary'?" and "Performing the Real."
17. "Ask the Critic: Robert Lloyd," p. E55 (emphasis mine).

18. Walter J. Ong, S.J., "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction," *PMLA* 90 (1975): 12 [9–21].
19. "PBS Greenlights New Mini-Series—Texas Ranch House," *PBS News*, *PBS.org*, http://www.pbs.org/aboutpbs/news/20050115_ranchhouse.html.
20. However, this had the unfortunate effect of creating a competition among the families, an effect that the producers had not anticipated or desired: according to Beth Hoppe, "In *Frontier House* the goal was: How would each family be set up to get through the winter that was coming? Which ended up, somewhat unexpectedly to us, pitting the Frontier House participants against each other in a competition"; "Interview with the Executive Producer," *Colonial House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/behind/answer5.html>.
21. Where *The Bachelor* depicts twenty-four women vying for one marriage proposal, *Regency House Party* recreates a nineteenth-century country house party where multiple eligible bachelors, suitable young ladies, and chaperones all attempt to create desirable matrimonial matches. "I think the Regency period really was a lot like today's reality dating shows," said executive producer Jody Sheff. "During the Regency, people were thrown together under intense and prescribed circumstances and in a very short time, with very little to go on, they had to find a match. The big difference is that now the romance lasts until the programs air. Back then, your decision was for the rest of your life"; quoted in "Regency House Party," *PBS Previews: Regency House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/previews/regencyhouse/>.
22. "PBS Greenlights New Mini-Series—Texas Ranch House."
23. Jean Davies, "About the Series," *Manor House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/theproject/index.html>.
24. For more on the historical training, see Liz Lodge, "The Training," *Colonial House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/behind/thenandnow.html>.
25. Certainly there are echoes here of MTV's house series, *Real World*, which asks what happens when participants "stop being polite and start getting real."
26. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 18.
27. A *Colonial House* producer explains: "Colonists began taking the cameras to isolated spots—a nearby hilltop, the shoreline, the store shed—to talk candidly about their experiences. Each colonist (some more than others) used the diary cams as a running journal, at times revealing their most intimate struggles; at other moments, rambling about what they had eaten that day. There was no restraint. Personal revelations, tearful breakdowns, vents, threats, confessions—the full emotional scope of the colonial experience was documented"; Paul Cabana, "Candid Camera," *Colonial House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/behind/candid.html>.
28. Beth Hoppe, "Interview with the Executive Producer," *Colonial House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/behind/answer9.html>.
29. "Manor House FAQs," *Manor House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/theproject/faq.html>.
30. While this is a reversal from many of the liminal experiences anthropologists have studied, where participants are freed from a structured hierarchy, the *House* series does the opposite by removing its participants' everyday autonomy so that they can better understand that autonomy.
31. Pierre Bourdieu, in *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), defines *habitus* as practical sense, as a feel for the game. Such a sense or feel is the product of various forms of *capital* that are acquired and internalized in the course of living a life.
32. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 56.
33. "Texas Ranch House," *PBS Previews: Texas Ranch House*, *PBS.org*, <http://www.pbs.org/previews/texasranchhouse/>.

34. As Beth Hoppe explains, "The other factor [in the difference between *Colonial House* and earlier *House* shows] is the more general social goal of looking at community. . . . It's much more ambitious, it's more complicated, and it's a bolder goal, to create a successful community"; quoted in "Interview with the Executive Producer," *Colonial House*, PBS.org, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/colonialhouse/behind/answer5.html>.
35. There are rules even for form of address; for instance, the lady's maid is to be addressed as "Miss" whether single or married although her mistress may address her by her Christian name; see "Edwardian Life: How to Treat Your Servants," *Manor House*, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/edwardianlife/family_address.html.
36. There are actually three scullery maids over the course of the production.
37. Anna Olliff-Cooper, "The People: After the House," *Manor House*, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/thepeople/lady_olliff_postthoughts.html.
38. John Olliff-Cooper, "The People: After the House," *Manor House*, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/thepeople/sir_john_postthoughts.html.
39. Episode Five, "Days of Empire," Disc Three, *Manor House*, DVD, directed by Nick Murphy (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2002).
40. Anna Olliff-Cooper, "The People: After the House."
41. Episode Two, "Making the Grade," Disc One, *Manor House*.
42. Episode Six, "Servants' Ball," Disc Three, *Manor House*.
43. Anna Olliff-Cooper, "The People: After the House."
44. Episode Four, "Taking the Waters," Disc Two, *Manor House*.
45. Episode Four, "Taking the Waters," Disc Two, *Manor House*.
46. Dr. Avril Anson, "The People: After the House," *Manor House*, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/thepeople/miss_anson_postthoughts.html.
47. Episode Five, "Days of Empire," Disc Three, *Manor House*.
48. Episode Six, "Winners and Losers," Disc Three, *Manor House*.
49. Hugh Edgar, "The People: After the House," *Manor House*, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/thepeople/mr_edgar_postthoughts.html.
50. Nick Gillespie, "The Perpetual Meaning Machine," *Reason*, March 2003, <http://www.reason.com/hod/The%20Perpetual%20Meaning%20Machine.pdf>.
51. Brown, "On the Borders," p. 44.
52. Brown, "On the Borders," p. 25.
53. Brown, "On the Borders," p. 36.
54. All citations of Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1987). "F" and "G" refer to the F-Prologue and G-Prologue, respectively. All references in the text to this work are indicated by line numbers in parentheses.
55. Brown, "On the Borders," p. 44. Note that Brown connects the state of "betweenness" to the theoretical conception of liminality, as a way for a "more thorough historicizing of the dream vision" (p. 46).
56. Brown, "On the Borders," p. 34.
57. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 27.
58. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 7.
59. Hugh Edgar, "The People: After the House," *Manor House*, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/thepeople/mr_edgar_postthoughts.html.
60. Jessica Rawlinson, "The People: After the House," *Manor House*, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/manorhouse/thepeople/jessica_postthoughts.html.
61. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 79.
62. Of course these shows are invariably ABC products.
63. "Their Turn to Be Rescued," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 2005: E1.

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HINGE: ENTERTAINING HISTORY/
HISTORICAL ENTERTAINMENTS

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CHAPTER 5

MEDIEVAL HISTORIES AND MODERN REALISM: YET ANOTHER ORIGIN OF THE NOVEL

Nancy F. Partner

This essay explores how the fictionalized framing conventions of the network news reflect the structural and epistemological techniques of standard medieval historiography, and how 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. Also raised here is the provocative question: what sort of linguistic thing is it that claims to be a true representation of human reality-in-time?

I was recently watching the evening news on a local network affiliate in South Florida and was forced to enjoy one of those moments that are like the mental equivalent of a hard eye-blink. The female news anchor was going on in that routine half-emphatic style about some episode of domestic violence that had been suppressed by timely police intervention following a call to 911. I was not listening very attentively, but suddenly I was watching: watching a man and a woman, muffled shouting that I couldn't hear very well, she retreating, he pushing, my view seemed from somewhere behind them in a smallish living room where the color had oddly drained out of their world as well as the sound, and the picture lurched like amateur camcorder productions, then the police came in at what had to be the front door, and I just had time to wonder, *what* am I seeing? how can I be *seeing* this? when the word "simulation" appeared on the screen for a second or two, and my confusion yielded to that increasingly common mixture compounded of 'dupe' and 'jaded' in equal parts. This happens a lot currently: a news story with enough human interest to broadcast but no visuals, and TV newscast and feature journalism producers, abhorring the unrelieved talking head, edge closer to the resources of fiction—from archival stock footage, through gradations of verisimilitude over to docudrama, reenactment, or so-called simulation—in the Florida instance, the crudeness of the hastily contrived footage being a positive advantage. *Video vérité* standing in for actual documentary footage, framed by all the visual conventions that mark off the

news report from the fictional show, simultaneously enhancing and diluting the cumulative truth-value in the same conflated (or confounded) moment.

This technique of incorporating fictions within the confines of a conventional truth-claim genre (here: news) is currently still a violation of the understood protocol for offering factual information in any modern media, and discussions of genre blurring tend to regard such techniques as stretching the boundaries, pushing against the limits, or otherwise venturing in an outward and uncharted, if not necessarily wise, direction. Only the benefit of a classical or medievalist training enables one to enjoy the mental double-take of recognizing ancient and medieval literary conventions strangely taking life again in highly unlikely places. It is difficult enough to deal with the fiction-inside-of-history phenomenon in its own cultural times and places, even with the excellent scholarly guidance available. Important issues of writer/reader relations, truth and representation, authorial intention and reader reception have not been effaced or resolved by appeals to cultural "alterity" and the long stretch of time, but remain sharp challenges for serious scholarship in several premodern fields.¹

I have long since resolved most of my first confusions about this fiction-inside-of-history phenomenon as it pervades the truth-claim narratives of the Middle Ages, although there will always be something disconcerting about seeing the conventions of medieval history-writing reincarnated in electronic communications on the cusp of the twenty-first century—definitely like a ghost in the machine.² Because the framing conventions of the network news, focusing on the news desk fact-altar, served by its carefully groomed anchor-acolytes who look us in the eye and speak ritually declarative sentences representing events in the shared reality of the external world, and then introject you-are-there scenes and sounds that no recorder was present to see or hear, are indeed the structural and epistemological equivalent of standard medieval historiographical technique. To offer one among thousands of exemplary instances, there is William of Malmesbury, self-conscious inheritor of the tradition of Bede, assuring readers that "I have always dreaded putting in writing, for transmission to posterity, anything that I did not know to be established as solid fact" [*quod nescirem solida veritate subsistere*].³ His histories are scrupulous and earnestly careful works by the standards of the twelfth century, and also quite unremarkably filled with the routine fictions sanctioned by usage. We are there in the king's bedchamber to hear William Rufus swearing at his servant while getting dressed: "You son of a whore, how long has the king been wearing such cheap boots?"—the key line in an insulting jokey anecdote that reveals the king to be not only wasteful and luxurious, but incapable of telling good quality from bad.⁴ Anecdotes with exemplum-like moral weight, direct speech, interior states, all such fictionally dramatized information is cloaked by the conventional assurance that the historian had heard it from a man, who heard it from a man, who really knew what he was talking about.⁵

Or to take another unquestionably reputable historian of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman world, the high-minded if rather priggish Orderic Vitalis, who assures us that he doesn't write "fictitious tragedy" or "wordy comedy" for profit or entertainment, but only records events truthfully for studious readers, to describe a history notable for its author's compulsive attraction to directly rendered speech, and the headlong plunge into the dramatized scene, the impersonated voice, the

you-are-there effect.⁶ Following the standard-setting example of Bede, who self-consciously set himself in the tradition of Jerome and the best historiographical practice of antiquity,⁷ historians like William of Malmesbury and Orderic assured their readers that they were offering generally accepted information of the past from written sources, supplemented by personal knowledge and contemporary testimony from persons of good character. That was the standard for writers and readers who cared about standards. In the words of William of Malmesbury: "I deem it necessary to acquaint [the reader] that I vouch nothing for the truth of long past transactions, but the consonance of the time; the veracity of the relation must rest with the authors. Whatever I have recorded of later times, I have either myself seen, or heard from credible authority."⁸ Orderic, who is particularly austere in his descriptions of the laborious self-dedication required of historians, is sometimes ostentatiously exacting in his selection of sources. About a certain saint whose biography he wished to include he notes: "Jongleurs sing a popular song about him, but a reliable account, carefully written by pious scholars... is certainly to be preferred to that." Orderic himself relies on the rare true account shown to him by Anthony, "a monk of Winchester," when he visited Orderic's monastery.⁹

But true information, or reliably conveyed information, was not the same as sufficient information for narrative purposes. There was no explicit standard governing the ample range of techniques derived from ancient rhetorical practice for enlivening and dramatizing thin historical information with invented dialogue, interesting details, scenic props, interior motivation, and anecdotal interest. This encyclopedic resource, limited only by the writer's skill, passed without comment into the interior of the writer-reader contract—its literary subconscious—intelligible to us only through cautious acts of inference. Medieval histories of any stature beyond annalistic notation supplied satisfactions far different from the earnest austere pleasures promised by historians in their prefatory and other self-flattering statements. Readers expected and historians supplied: the immediacy of moments imagined inside the king's chamber and other inaccessible places; voices caught in repartée and revealing outbursts; the telling gesture; the detail that enacts a whole scene in the mind; true last thoughts from noble deathbeds; even scenes direct from the Other World beyond death.¹⁰

All 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. E.M. Forster, in his 1927 Cambridge lectures on English literature, celebrated this victory without hesitation or self-doubt. A basic psychological demand, the need to know more than reality permits, drives the realist novel because only fiction, in Forster's words, "goes beyond the evidence, and each of us knows from his own experience that there is something beyond the evidence."¹¹ History, constrained by its evidence-commitment to exterior reality, is limited to offering readers the true but inadequate facts justified by evidence: "If Queen Victoria had not said, 'We are not amused,' her neighbors at table would not have known she was not amused, and her ennui could never have been announced to the public."¹²

Victoria's silent ennui might never have been announced to the nineteenth-century history-reading public. Had she lived in the twelfth century, any number of interesting things about her state of mind might have been described had they filled a historian's narrative gap or didactic purpose. The need to know beyond the evidence is usually gratified as soon as it arises in medieval narrative history (albeit *what* we wish to know is usually different from a medieval taste). In fact, the original audience for monastically produced histories, for example, Orderic's brother monks of Saint-Evroul listening over dinner to parts of his history read aloud (and Orderic's complaints about certain ungrateful hyper-critical persons suggest this kind of audience for his in-progress work)¹³ were in exactly the same situation as I was in front of the television news: the historian-narrator dissolving into impersonated characters whose very words would be spoken aloud by the reader, and probably with feeling.

This phenomenon of what I call the "incorporated fictions" that fill and fill out historical narrative from classical antiquity through the seventeenth century has been recognized candidly and discussed by classical and medieval scholars. I have been over this ground myself, always with questions addressed to 'history,' history as a form of epistemological claim, history as a cultural construct, history as a complex literary protocol. In short, history as genre: what sort of linguistic thing is it that claims to be a true representation of human reality-in-time?¹⁴ And what does it mean that this truth-claiming literature, until very recently, was routinely inflated with counterfactual, anti-evidentiary, unverifiable depictions? Is history, *qua* history as cultural artifact, substantially changed by its incorporation of fiction? These are genre questions, grounded in historical literary culture, with transhistorical epistemological implications.

And we do find directions toward satisfactory and coherent answers, not only from clever medievalists, but also when we look over the shoulders of classical and biblical scholarship. All modern scholarship in these fields acknowledges that the central truth-claim genres for the Western tradition—secular history from its classical Greek origins extending through Latin antiquity, and the Hebrew and Greek writings which grounded the relation of God to humanity in the events of this world—are, in literary terms, amalgams of evidence-constrained statements and tacitly licensed fictions, collected together under a generic truth-claim. The truth-claim which extends its authority over the entire text is often announced openly (with Thucydides's preface being the *locus classicus* for the historical tradition). The use of fiction is always present in ancient truth-claim discourse and thus, we must infer, was permitted by cultural consensus, but the nature of this "license" is itself an implicit silent effect of reading, still much debated among classicists. With respect to the Greek and Roman tradition, a basic uneasiness, arising to irascibility in scholarly footnotes and reviews, lingers on over the rhetorical practices of "amplification," "invention/*inventio*," "*ornare*," and related others, which involve building up and filling out a bare factual report with appropriate and verisimilar contents, including more events, fictional events, as well as composing fictional speeches attributed to historical persons.

A traditionalist like Charles Fornara, in his book *History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, insists that verisimilar elaborations were controlled and limited by the established facts and thus were "irrelevant to the categories of 'fact' and 'fiction,' 'truth and falsity,' 'honesty and dishonesty,' so often applied to the discredit of the ancients."¹⁵

The activity of historical mimesis, as understood in antiquity, had, in Fornara's opinion, a firm moral center: "if you develop the inherent possibilities of a true datum, *ornare* is legitimate; if from a fiction (where the psychology may be to delight the reader), the practice is culpable."¹⁶ In these opinions he stands well-centered in the mainstream tradition of classical scholarship which has always defended the ancient historians as the founders of the modern truth-committed discipline.

At the other pole of the contemporary spectrum, the classicist Anthony J. Woodman, in his book on *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, urges us to "rid ourselves of the mistaken notion that the ancients' view of historical truth was the same as ours.... To our modern way of thinking it seems very strange to insist that the hard core [of facts] should be true when the elaboration of that hard core is by definition (in our terms) false. Yet clearly matters did not present themselves this way to the ancients."¹⁷ In his view, ancient history was plainly understood by contemporary writers and readers as a subspecies of rhetoric, one in which the core of factual material was routinely overwhelmed and subsumed into an invented narrative of nonfactual events, speeches, and scenes in the service of entertainment and ethics. Woodman is joined in his view by a minority but distinguished company of scholarship.

Disagreeing in every other particular and conclusion, Fornara and Woodman yet implicitly agree that what they are discussing is something generically called history, a species of prose composition governed by a writer/reader contract of truth-claim, purporting to offer an account of events in the real world. The area of disagreement concerns how much truth was implicitly promised by the historian's truth-claim and what the fictional passages are doing to that truth. And generally, modern approaches to genre, the basic history or fiction question, are oriented to cultural function and social discursive ends. The biblical scholar and narrative theorist Meir Sternberg (in his indispensable book for this topic, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, and important articles in *Poetics Today*), has laid out the history/fiction question more lucidly than anyone else: "For history-writing is not a record of fact—of what 'really happened'—but a discourse that claims to be a record of fact. Nor is fiction-writing a tissue of free inventions but a discourse that claims freedom of invention. The antithesis lies not in the presence or absence of truth value but of the commitment to truth value."¹⁸ To make coherent sense of a text in terms of communication: "In the framework of an implicit sociocultural code, [the writer] wields certain linguistic and structural tools with an eye to certain effects, [the reader] infers a coherent message from the signals, and the discourse mediates between the two, embodying intent and guiding response."¹⁹ From early antiquity until quite recently, the fictional expansion of factual contents was an acceptable and conventional practice within literary discourse that offered a serious truth-claim as its generic reading instruction.

This whole-text approach to literary genre can negotiate all the turns of the linguistic turn as well as the mechanics of reference and verification. It is summed up in the austere Sternbergian law of discourse: teleology governs typology. The textual intention (truth-claim or license to invent) governs the purpose of textual contents: basic genre coordinates tell us what the fictions are doing within historical texts. This is the very discourse-functional approach which has produced the stunningly effective results of Gabrielle Spiegel's work on the French vernacular chronicles of the thirteenth century, and which she has articulated

as her general “theory of the middle ground,” which grounds literary types and narrative procedures in their social functions.²⁰ In historical genre terms, at least until the modern strict protocol for history evolved, fictional contents did the work assigned to them by their historical intentions.

Fully accepting that medieval histories are histories by virtue of their communicative function (alias: textual intention), just as the Bible functioned as history, and Herodotus and Tacitus wrote history for contemporary readers, however rhetorically, I am still drawn back to examine the fictions incorporated into medieval histories partly because these are the kind of fictions I find so much more interesting than the kinds found in epic, romance, allegory, or fabliaux. One might at least ask for what *other* category of inquiry than the impact on historical discourse might “fiction incorporated into history” be the proper object of inspection? I see no particular reason to limit such an interesting aspect of medieval culture to genre questions alone. The characteristics of medieval history’s incorporated fictions are interesting in themselves: the persons depicted are quite often obscure or ordinary people (a literary rarity); they often converse in short back-and-forth exchanges rather than formal speeches; we are taken with them to private rooms and bits of landscape evoked in suggestive detail; intriguing objects and furnishings appear; the action occurs in inconsequent stops and starts, often moved by recognizable, less than heroic motivation. In short, this kind of fiction is really quite like fiction.

It is still useful to recapitulate the most salient and characteristic function that drives the fictional form in medieval truth-claim narratives as lucidly stated in Morton Bloomfield’s classic essay, “Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer.”²¹ The kind of “realism” to which Bloomfield refers is a complex artifice of literary effect, not a naive correspondence of words to a purported real world, and is part of the basic strategy for acceptance of any narrative (narrative itself being an authenticating strategy for the conveying of information). On the largest scale, as Bloomfield notes, the Jewish and Christian religious traditions, grounded in revelation and historicity, have been a “powerful influence for associating authentication with narrative.” He locates the most intense efforts of authentication in medieval saints’ lives where “[t]he author or teller of a saint’s life faced problems similar to those of a novelist who cannot count on the suspension of his audience’s disbelief.”²² The need for credibility moves the truth-claim narrative marred by gaps or questionable reception in the direction of circumstantial plausibility.

Here is an example of a credibility-driven text, this from the *Life of Christina of Markyate*, an *antemortem* biography with hagiographic aspirations.²³ Christina was a teenage girl from the early urban patriciate in twelfth-century England; she dedicated herself to perpetual virginity in a secret vow and thereby rebelled against the social ambitions of her parents who aggressively tried to force her to marry. Exasperated by Christina’s stubborn defiance, her parents finally urged her fiancé to enter her bedroom and force her into sexual compliance. When his first halfhearted attempt failed, he was egged on to a second try at sanctioned rape.

When Christina realized this, she hastily sprang out of bed and clinging with both hands to a nail which was fixed in the wall, she hung trembling between the wall

and the tapestry. Burthred [the fiancé] approached the bed, not finding her there, he signaled to the people waiting by the door. They burst into the room with lights and ran around looking for her. . . . What I ask, what were her feelings at that moment? How she was trembling as they noisily searched for her. She imagined herself dragged out into the middle of them, everyone standing around her, looking at her and threatening, herself given over to sport of her corruptor. Finally one of them took hold of her foot with his hand as she hung there, but with the tapestry in between he didn't know what it was, so he let go. . . . [Christina said a silent prayer] and everyone went away.²⁴

The author, the hovering and near-omniscient "I," had an informant for the episode, Christina herself, remembering and narrating the story for maximum effect many years afterward—she was, we note, supposedly behind the wall tapestry all the time. But the authenticating engine here is the need to justify the young Christina's defiance of her respectable family and distract attention from a number of behavioral problems, most notably the odd lapse of her betrothal (witnessed by many people)—when the consistent sincerity of her vow was the basis of her later claim on sanctity. And so the literary furniture of verisimilitude fills the little scene: a bedroom in an urban family home; wall tapestries and the thick nails for hanging them; that perfect gesture of someone groping at the tapestry, not registering that he had touched her foot. And we have to note the deft little fiction within the fiction, the chilling entry into Christina's fearful imagination of being discovered, of cruel people standing around her, looking. It works. As Bloomfield remarks (although not about this text): "This religious demand for truth reinforced the deeper more primitive truth-claim of ordinary narrative and helped to strengthen the importance of authenticating devices in Western narrative technique."²⁵

Similarly, the most vividly convincing, little-dramatized scenes in Orderic Vitalis's history are those acting in the service of a miracle or moral in need of bolstering, as when "a certain man named Bricstan" from a village in England called Chatteris got into complicated trouble when he tried to make a (perhaps dubious) property arrangement with a monastery and ended up being accused of holding out money he owed the king. This elaborately circumstantial episode is introduced framed in layers of respectable provenance: it is alleged to have been written by Abbot Warin of St. Evroul (Orderic's monastery) who heard it on a visit in England with Abbot Robert of Thorney Abbey, and then wrote it for Hervey, the bishop of Ely, who (in Orderic's history) publishes it under his own auspices as being "most delightful to hear, salutary to remember."²⁶ The layers of narrative authority have the effect of dissolving into something like omniscient narration.

This Bricstan was an ordinary, inoffensive man, neither rich nor poor, but he came up against a tough royal official who accused him of financial crimes. At his trial people made fun of him because "he was rather fat, and short, and had what one might call a homely face." He was found guilty and gave over all his money, and listed his debts and debtors, swearing in desperation that he had admitted everything; his very English words are quoted: "That wat min lauert Godel mihtin that ic sege soth" [My Lord, God almighty knows that I speak the truth]—helpful Latin also in the text. He urged his wife to admit anything she knew, and she said: "Domine, besides what you said I have nothing at all but 16

shillings and two rings worth fourpence.”²⁷ He was locked up in prison, chained down, sick and despairing, and Saint Benedict with both his sisters, Etheldreda and Sexburga, came in person to save him. They were so bright in the dark cell that Bricstan had to shade his eyes with his hand. Benedict not only broke the chains off Bricstan’s feet, he flung them aside and hit the beam holding up the ceiling so hard that the noise woke up the guards sleeping upstairs, and they ran down and saw the broken chains and the big crack Benedict had made in the beam. And another prisoner in the cell told them that he didn’t know who those people were, but there was a bright light and some people came in and talked with Bricstan: “What they said or did, ask him, he knows better.”²⁸

This is the kind of writing—plausible (even the central miracle is kept in modest scale), circumstantial, obeying the constraints of time and space, where people talk more often than orate and suffer emotions on a non-heroic scale—that seems to surface in such accomplished and sustained display in the early eighteenth century, in the writing of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, that the “origins of the English novel” is a question that requires answering still. Bloomfield’s interest in “authenticating realism,” a phrase that is packed with correct observation and meaning, and is good to think with in so many ways, was directed specifically to Chaucer, marking off the special use Chaucer made of his frame device and its invocation of a real setting for the tales. But the realism that authenticates, authenticates the experience of reading, once it is distributed evenly throughout an entire narrative whose writer/reader contract is not constrained by truth-claim evolves into what we call the novel: the surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe, the epistolary narrative of a servant girl named Pamela, the adventures of Tom Jones.

I feel I should restate that I am not going in a direction that would debunk or reclassify the status of medieval history-writing as history, or at least not destabilize it any more than recent linguistic turn strategies have already done. History is still that kind of literary thing which operates, in good faith, under the operative conventions, constraints, and general protocol for truth-claim at any given sociocultural moment—Christina’s foot and Bricstan’s tax problems included.

The locus where history and fiction intersect most seamlessly, and uncontrollably, is where discourse arrives at its teleological goal in the reader (invoking here a theory of reading or reception which is active, not passive). Paul Ricoeur’s complex parsing of Aristotle’s concept of mimesis into three levels of culturally expressive discourse requires the third level (mimesis₃ or “refiguration” in Ricoeurian terminology—the level of the reader) for mimetic completion. Here the narrative process of inscribing intelligible human time onto the formless stretch of cosmological time achieves its purpose as the mind of the reader deciphers the encoded signals for fiction or history “configured” or emplotted by the writer (at the level of mimesis₂).²⁹

And it is here, in historical narrative, under certain conditions, that history elides into the “fiction-effect,” when “we enter into an implicit pact of reading and share in the complicity it establishes between the narrative voice and the implied reader. . . . Mistrust is willingly suspended. Confidence reigns.”³⁰ Ricoeur alludes in this discussion to the now-prohibited practices of ancient historians who made lavish use of the techniques of fiction for “making visible” the narrated event, and closed the distance between “seeing as” (Ricoeur’s phrase

for historical or truth-claim representation) and “believing we are seeing”—the reality effect of fiction. When this happens while reading *history*, the controlled distance of self-consciously provisional knowledge, or “‘holding as true’ which defines belief, succumbs to the hallucination of presence.”³¹ The special force of authenticating realism which informs all medieval historical writing solicits this “hallucination of presence” without trepidation or restraint.

It is this stylistic effect located with special intensity at that middle level of the ordinary, emerging and submerging in the historical genre frame that wants to connect, however loosely, with the stylistically consistent thing called the realist novel. The complicated and seemingly unending inquiry into the origins of realist fictional narratives in prose is an interesting site in literary scholarship. Michael McKeon’s *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740*,³² apparently a staple of university courses in the novel, and a fascinating if dauntingly over-determined book, takes as its agonistic progenitor Ian Watt’s *Rise of the Novel*, which notably linked together the literary techniques of “formal realism” with enlightenment “philosophic realism,” and set them in the context of secularized Protestantism and the rise of the middle class. McKeon’s multifaceted response frames the inquiry as centrally epistemological in the most profound and pervasive senses.

In McKeon’s account, the novelists, Richardson and Fielding, emerge as not only rivals for the esteem and patronage of the early-eighteenth-century reading public, but protagonists of conflicting philosophies of knowledge and the ethics of literary effect. History, as usual, is consistently invoked as the framing contrast. By the end of the eighteenth century, “In the realm of prose fiction, questions of truth will be addressed by reference to a notion of ‘history’ that is now sufficiently separated from ‘literature’ to be ‘realistically’ represented by it.”³³ But to arrive at that place of generic separation and mutual definition when writers and readers brought distinctly different expectations to history and fiction, McKeon pushes his realm of argument back into the seventeenth century, for literary, philosophic, and cultural context.

Other literary historians are interestingly moving the relevant context back even further, retaining the fiction/history axis for epistemology as it connects with genre. Robert Mayer’s *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe* moves the origins debate forward by going backward into yet another century.³⁴ Mayer takes Daniel Defoe (whose fictions were persistently read as history) as his critical point of departure and tracks history and fiction as epistemological questions. He notes acutely that the alleged “historical revolution” of the seventeenth century, which supposedly purged history of unseemly rhetorical excess, hardly encompassed everything that contemporary readers regarded as history. Taking as his objects of study all the works that seem to have been read as history during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, writers of romance and of history again join in one blurred category of ambiguous textual intentions and uncertain reader reception. I think that the scope of such projects might as well extend yet further backward in time toward the medieval historians, although scholars of the novel never seem to think of looking there for any of the ingredients of realist fiction. Matters of writer/reader understandings, persuasion and verisimilitude, truth and authentication are the topics of Mayer’s very acute and well-judged discussion in this reverse teleology of the realist novel. I think this reverse direction is the

right way forward, at least for linking together the relevant components that, under one long enduring set of conditions, configured themselves as truth-claim history, and yet finally evolved into fictionally licensed realism.

What the medieval historians display for us is the development of a stylistic vocabulary of fictional *techniques* pushed forward by history's necessary commitment to plausibility and circumstantial authentication and sheltered under history's generic truth-claim. As a counter-example, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who never (in my opinion) intended his book to be included with those by Bede or Henry of Huntingdon, composed fantastic fictions that are much closer in style to romance or epic. History, even when chiefly concerned with royalty and aristocrats, gravitated to the "reality effect" of mundane verisimilitude.

A final example is the awful scene from Froissart's *Chronicle* in which a knight rapes a woman in her own home, and he pushes "a little glove which he had with him" into her mouth to keep her quiet.³⁵ It is the moment when we encounter that glove, a "little glove," not a riding or hunting gauntlet and thus so suitable for use as an improvised gag, that we are really picturing a rape—a terrible moment and one of realist brilliance. That little glove, and thousands more of the petty accessories that furnish reality, would accumulate the technical vocabulary of realism, and eventually furnish the rooms of Pamela's world.

Notes

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1. For example, the interesting anthology of conference proceedings, *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, ed. Christopher Gill and T.P. Wiseman (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), shows the range of interest directed to ancient truth-claim texts, and Monika Otter's *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) intelligently examines the presence of fictionality in historical or borderline texts using modern literary critical and narrative approaches to authorial intentionality, as does Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
2. The current efflorescence and virtually unchecked growth of ostensibly truth-claim information padded with verisimilar fictions, which recall the "so new yet so old" usages of ancient and medieval historical composition, are discussed in my "Historicity in an Age of Reality Fictions," in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Hans Kellner and Frank Ankersmit (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 21–39.
3. William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella* [New History], trans. K.R. Potter (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1955), p. 70. His earlier and longer work, the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* [Deeds of the Kings of England], is introduced with what had become the assurances conventional to the genre that the author relies on written authorities for the distant past who themselves are responsible for their own veracity, but grounds more recent events in his own knowledge or that of reliable witnesses.
4. William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, trans. J.A. Giles (1847; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1968), pp. 335–36.
5. William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*—as, for example, the anecdotes about Pope Gregory VII: "I shall relate some anecdotes of him, which I have not heard trivially, but from the sober relation of a person who would swear that he had learned them from the mouth of Hugo, abbot of Cluny" (p. 296).

6. Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 4:106–07. “I neither compose a fictitious tragedy for the sake of gain, nor entertain cackling parasites with a wordy comedy, but truly record events of different kinds for studious readers.” These words are in the concluding passage of Orderic’s extensive account of the last days, death, and funeral of King William the Conqueror, a sequence notable for William’s deathbed speech, which “deserves to be remembered for all time” and is seven pages long, summarizes his life, reign, and policies, and is rendered in the verbatim first person (pp. 81–95). It hardly needs to be added that the truth intended in this elaborately composed section only begins at its core of recorded events.
7. Roger Ray, “Bede’s *Vera Lex Historiae*,” *Speculum* 55 (1980): 1–21.
8. William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, p. 4.
9. Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:218–19. He in fact exaggerates his dedication and suffering for the sake of the true account, noting that the weather was so cold he could not write with a pen and so had to make a copy on wax tablets and wait to recopy the life on parchment.
10. Orderic’s tour de force in this regard is his extended narrative of the vision of the priest, Walchelin, who encountered a troop of the dead riding through a midnight forest, in Book VIII, 237–51; the *locus classicus* for this interposition of a completely dramatized vision of the state of souls after death is Bede’s vision of Drychthelm, and Bede was of course aware that Gregory the Great had included short accounts of visions of the Other World in his *Dialogues*. The fictionality here is not that of specific content since we presume that all medieval Christians believed in an Other World inhabited by the souls of the dead, but the rendering of it: dramatized narrators, impersonated voices with characters reporting the conversation of other characters, feelings, conversations, scenery, atmosphere, etc.
11. E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 69–70: “In this direction fiction is truer than history, because it goes beyond the evidence, and each of us knows from his own experience that there is something beyond the evidence, and, even if the novelist has not got it correctly, well—he has tried.” This effort to provide knowledge of other people’s interior lives is the fiction writer’s special province and privilege, in this classic statement of the modern novel.
12. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 55.
13. Roger D. Ray, “Orderic Vitalis and His Readers,” *Studia Monastica* 14 (1972): 17–33.
14. The showcase for the problems in establishing history or fiction as the textual cum authorial intention for medieval genre studies is Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*, which I survey in “Notes on the Margins: Editors, Editions, and Sliding Definitions,” in *The Politics of Editing Medieval Texts*, ed. Roberta Frank (New York: AMS Press, 1993), pp. 1–18.
15. Charles Fornara, *History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 135. Fornara represents a mainstream tradition of scholarship on the classical historians, in which a deep erudition acknowledges and traces the modes of rhetorical amplification and invention, while also insisting on the commitment to truth as the essential or defining characteristic of historical writing. This leads him to conclude that, “*sub specie aeternitatis*, history has altered but little” (p. 200).
16. Fornara, *History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, p. 136. In general, Fornara views the influence of rhetoric on historical writing as deleterious and unfortunate, and regards rhetorical techniques and purposes as somehow external to, or an imposition on history.

17. A.J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (Portland, OR: Areopagita Press, 1986), pp. 74 and 92. Woodman is typical of another modern strain of scholarship, dissenting from the mainstream, which focuses attention on the fictional elaborations within ancient histories and allows their conceptions of ancient historiography to be modified by them. Therefore, reading the same texts and often the very same passages as occur in Fornara's book, Woodman concludes that: "it will be clear that in my view classical historiography is different from its modern namesake because it is primarily a rhetorical genre and is to be classified (in modern terms) as literature rather than history" (p. 197). He is debating Fornara, Sir Ronald Syme, and a host of others on this central point. Woodman is not isolated in his countervail reading of the ancient historians; T.P. Wiseman's *Clio's Cosmetics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979) is an earlier and very influential progenitor, and Wiseman continues to expound similar ideas about the dominance of fiction in ancient history.
18. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), p. 25. Sternberg, trained both in modern literary critical studies and biblical scholarship, is an extraordinarily clear-headed analyst of the fundamental questions about literature, writers, and readers, and how linguistic conventions work in relation to the out-of-text world; the fact that he addresses these universally relevant questions to the most important and problematic text in the Western tradition makes his work all the more valuable to the study of post-biblical genres. The first chapter of the book describes in detail his general theory of literary genre, including but not exclusively directed to the Bible. Another recent and lucidly focused discussion of basic genre questions is by Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), which extends a generous and needed attention to nonfictional narrative with the instruments of narrative theory.
19. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, p. 15.
20. Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); she notes that the French prose chroniclers used all the resources of verisimilitude available to them, including prose itself, replacing the indirect discourse of their sources with direct speech, vividly realized dramatic episodes, without any apparent commitment to historical accuracy (pp. 95–96). But in spite of the wholesale fictionalizing, in content and technique of presentation, of the chivalric pasts attached to their aristocratic patrons, these historians were still responding to and obliquely referring to a real world of social and political conflict and anxiety. See Gabrielle Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text" and "Towards a Theory of the Middle Ground" for the general theoretical grounding of this very sophisticated and persuasive approach, in Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 3–28 and 44–56, respectively.
21. Morton W. Bloomfield, "Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer," in Morton W. Bloomfield, *Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 175–98.
22. Bloomfield, "Authenticating Realism," pp. 182–83.
23. *Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth Century Recluse*, ed. C.H. Talbot, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). The author of this work was a monk of St. Albans, a monastery closely connected with Christina's later career, and a personal friend of his subject; he champions her reputation against a number of contemporary detractors.
24. *Life of Christina of Markyate*, p. 53.

25. Bloomfield, "Authenticating Realism," p. 184.
26. Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:347. The confusing layers of provenance, with the story allegedly taken from the published writings of Abbot Warin but introduced as if written or published by Bishop Hervey of Ely after being told by Abbot Robert of Thorney, and then seamlessly included in the rest of Orderic's narrative, have the paradoxical effect of strengthening the fictional effect, that of a self-referring confident and omniscient account.
27. Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:349–53.
28. Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:353–55.
29. See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. I, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 54–71, for this very compelling neo-Aristotelian unpacking of the activity of mimesis.
30. Paul Ricoeur, "The Interweaving of History and Fiction," in Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. III, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 186, addresses directly the unavoidable ambiguity of effect and epistemological consequence where history incorporates the impulses of fiction, and fiction imitates historical narrative.
31. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. III, p. 186. This startling psychological description defines the reader's willing seduction into the historical text, the will to read without any critical distance.
32. Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), covers nearly all of the origins terrain in fascinating detail, except for the highly conventional and unquestioned point of departure, the seventeenth century, a period when it is generally assumed that everything "medieval" was safely finished.
33. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel*, p. 419. Another exceptionally acute and sensitive discussion of the epistemological and moral issues raised by the literary techniques of realism in the eighteenth century is that of Leo Damrosch, *Fictions of Reality in the Age of Hume and Johnson* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Damrosch works through issues of reader reception, the creation of a consensus of writer/reader understandings, and the functional effectiveness of fictions in the highly developed complexity of Johnson's and Hume's thoughts on fiction and its equivocal powers. His approach to the definition of basic genre (fiction/history) is very similar to that of Meir Sternberg, and his book seeks the conscious awareness of the need for writer/reader consensus in eighteenth-century writers.
34. Robert Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997) opens the discussion to writers and kinds of quasi-historical writing in the century of Defoe that are not very often subjected to literary historical analysis. Finding "that seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century history incorporated fictional elements...and markedly polemical rhetoric," and that "[h]istory was the one discourse that virtually all seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fiction writers themselves associated with the novel and identified as the matrix of their fictions" (pp. 11 and 14), Mayer's approach can work perfectly well for the preceding medieval centuries of literary production. He traces the persistent appearance of fictional realism in works that purported to be historical, until the final new development in which all-fiction works hived off from history.
35. Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Geoffrey Brereton (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 310.

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CHAPTER 6

SACRIFICING FICTION AND THE QUEST FOR THE REAL KING ARTHUR

Myra J. Seaman and John Green

The film King Arthur and the History Channel documentary The Quest for King Arthur both claim to have located a material, historically identifiable body on which to place the legends of King Arthur, yet both also depend upon the resources of fiction to convey the supposedly “real man” behind the myth. In its melding of chronicle history and romance narrative, medieval Arthurian historiography displays less anxiety over the truth-value and utility of historical fictions.

Part of the pre-release publicity blitz accompanying the 2004 film *King Arthur*¹ was *The Quest for King Arthur*,² an independently produced documentary aired by the History Channel in the weeks preceding the release of the Hollywood film. This version of the documentary (unlike the original version, available for purchase on the History Channel website) includes supplemental narration provided by Ioan Gruffudd, the actor who plays Lancelot in the film. The documentary, in turn, was promoted by a supplement included in *The New York Times*. This composite text—the film (and its promotional trailers), the documentary, and the ad for the documentary—reflects a shared vision of the truth: Arthur the (historical and real) Man must be rediscovered, to replace Arthur the (fictional and unreal) Myth. This tension is revealed as the two inner pages of the four-page newspaper insert present a series of short blurbs to describe the legends of King Arthur and their transformations over the centuries. The ad notes that “[e]ach generation of Britons, from the fall of Rome onward[,] had need for an Arthur. And each generation, for several centuries, got the Arthur it needed.”³ The ad further explains that the versions of the story written by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century and Sir Thomas Malory in the fifteenth had the greatest impact on their respective generations and those to come, seen for instance in Victorian England’s regular adoption of Arthurian tropes for its literature and in the Kennedy administration being referred to as the new Camelot in the White House. In twenty-first-century America, the ad proclaims, Arthur’s reach goes beyond mere iconography to extend to our political foundation: “our representative democracy flies, like a well-aimed arrow, straight back to the

Knights of the Round Table."⁴ We are who we are, then, because of the Round Table. Yet despite the many ways that Arthur's tangible "presence is vivid in many cultures," the ad concludes, "King Arthur may never have lived even one day on this earth." The ad insists that "he himself, King Arthur in the flesh, is missing,"⁵ and it views this as a problem in dire need of resolution.

This lure of an absent royal presence is intended to intrigue readers (and potential viewers), but the meanings the various story versions offer are, the ad indicates, inferior to the material truth of the physical man. Even though "he's here—he's there—he's everywhere," this ubiquity is insufficient: "for yet—he, himself—may be nowhere."⁶ The ad constructs two Arthurs, Arthur the legend and Arthur the man, and the latter is "he, himself," whereas the former is, the ad implies, a mere simulation. In the same way that Malory's and Geoffrey's narratives (as the ad claims) "were the fulfillment of 1,000 years of Arthur fantasizing" that "made all the [previous] Arthurian tales disappear into insignificance,"⁷ the documentary positions itself as the fulfillment of 200 years of modern historical investigation that will replace the fictions of the legendary Arthur with the facts of the historical man. This promise is depicted metonymically in the ad's key image: on the first page of the supplement, on a plain, white background, a shining crown (with no king underneath) floats, an image clearly intended to extend the force of the only text on this page: "King Arthur is missing." The last page of the advertisement asks, "Did the greatest king who ever lived, ever live?" The purpose of the documentary, it seems, is to find out, in an investigative-reporting kind of way, the truth hidden behind the legendary kingship. Driving the investigation is the assumption that King Arthur holds value only as a real, live man filling an absence, providing a head to wear the empty crown.

The ad is built upon our modern distrust of the truths offered by legend or, more broadly, fictional evidence; and it plays upon our modern faith in the ability of material artifacts to fill the absence indicated by the stories themselves. The central image of the ad, which accompanies that fundamental question, demonstrates this metaphorically: a stereotypical knight in shining armor slashes with his sword through an illustration of stereotypical chivalric lords and ladies in what is meant to appear to be a medieval manuscript, complete with faded, time-worn edges. The knight destroys the illuminated manuscript because the truth it pretends to offer is, from the perspective of the ad, only misleading. Viewers, in the role of the questing knight, must tear through the facade of such stories to discover the real truth they obscure. The ad paints the documentary as deconstructing the mythic Arthur so as to replace that hollow story with the facts of the historical man who really existed. The program will disbelieve myth, legend, and storytelling—all mere shadows of the real man. The originator of the Arthurian myth must, the ad argues, be a physical man, and the History Channel's *The Quest for King Arthur* will find him.

In its series of blurbs retelling the various extant legends of Arthur, the documentary, like the ad, makes use of legends and stories even while remaining suspicious of those very sources; this attitude is consistent with the way that the film *King Arthur* reimagines the story of Arthur through a focus on its supposed historical rather than legendary significance. The splash screens of one of the theatrical trailers state, "For centuries historians believed that the tale of

King Arthur and his knights was only a legend. But the myth was based on a real hero"; this film, it announces, is the "true story behind the legend."⁸ The trailer affirms that despite all of the fictionalizing liberties that the filmmakers must have taken, it is a "true story," a history. Moreover, the trailers also declare centuries of historians inept in determining the reality behind one of the most famous Western myths, mistaking it as *only* a legend. Clearly the movie takes its historical contribution very seriously: the advertisements claim that through the movie's story, we can more fully understand early British history. *King Arthur* claims to be a history, a legitimate historical depiction where the past is more than just a stage.⁹ And, it implies, all other "versions" of Arthur are therefore false to some degree. Like the documentary, the film's faith is in the physical, and this faith is evidenced by the filmmakers' great concern with replicating the appearance of the past, representing history through the recreation of the historical setting's materiality. The movie's elaborate set, according to the film's historical consultant, John Matthews (independent scholar and cofounder of The Foundation of Inspirational and Oracular Studies), allowed him the experience of *being* in the Middle Ages: "The whole feel of it, and the look of it. . . . When you're looking at the armor, and the weapons, you're looking at the horses, the setting of it all, the detail is phenomenal, and it is very, very accurate indeed. . . . This is about as near as you could get to going back to the sixth century, except it doesn't smell as bad."¹⁰ His excitement about the realistic feel of the set and his investment in the historical accuracy of the movie's materiality reflect what seems to be a dominant trend among filmmakers of big-budget Hollywood sword-and-sandal films. Such movies are set in the classical or medieval period, often centering on political conflict and war in national or ethnic arenas, and they include such classics as *Ben Hur* (Wyler 1959) and *Spartacus* (Kubrick 1960) and, more recently, *Gladiator* (Scott 2000), *The Passion of the Christ* (Gibson 2003), *Troy* (Petersen 2004), *Alexander* (Stone 2004), *King Arthur* (Fuqua 2004), *Kingdom of Heaven* (Scott 2005), and *Tristan & Isolde* (Reynolds 2006). These movies tell fictionalized stories of historical events around which written evidence is scarce. Because of this lack of written evidence, twentieth- and twenty-first-century incarnations of the sword-and-sandal film pay especially close attention to archaeological detail. The name "sword-and-sandal" refers to the material culture of these films, the archaeological record, even down to the shape of the sword or the style of the sandal. As a result, a historical consultant is as commonplace on the set as a sound editor and cinematographer, often working closely with both. But the place of the historical consultant is most frequently with the set designers and graphic artists—with those responsible for constructing the "look" and "feel" of the visual set, not those concerned with the authenticity of the events or the behaviors of the characters. If an important aspect of making a historical film is affirming its historical veracity, then a corollary to that principle is that the historical veracity exists mainly in terms of the visual appearance of the film.

In contrast, the story of such a film is often essentially unrelated to the historical milieu depicted. The historical setting becomes a "pretext" (to adopt Umberto Eco's term for one of his "Ten Little Middle Ages")¹¹ for a meditation on present concerns. The psychology of the peasant who will rise to fame as a great leader in a sword-and-sandal film set in fourteenth-century England need

not be that of a peasant from the Middle Ages, since in a sword-and-sandal film the English Middle Ages are used only as a “sort of mythological stage on which to place contemporary characters.”¹² The peasant’s psychology would be that of the film’s middle class, twenty-first-century audience. The mud hut that the English peasant lives in, however, must appear to depict the medieval environment accurately, so that the audience can believe that the peasant is real, because his material environment is. In “Dreaming of the Middle Ages,” Eco distinguishes in this way between genuine historical novels and cloak-and-dagger novels set in the past.¹³ Genuine historical novels offer stories that are to be read as if they happened in a particular historical moment; cloak-and-dagger novels set in a past era are unapologetically anachronistic. Historical novels help us to understand something about the past; cloak-and-dagger novels help us to understand something about ourselves, about our modern condition, but at a somewhat safe remove. Similarly, the story of a sword-and-sandal film is not there to help us grasp more fully its historical setting and significance. The historical setting, instead, is meant to lend credibility to the story, a story that is relevant to (and meant for) its modern audience. The modern, anachronistic fictional protagonists in the cloak-and-dagger novels, who are surrounded by “historical figures that support their credibility” in a historical time period from which the protagonists themselves are not derived, are like the narratives in sword-and-sandal films, which are themselves truly modern, supported by a setting intended to appear utterly historical.

In *Kingdom of Heaven*, set in twelfth-century France and Jerusalem during the Crusades, the story is, as *Rolling Stone* writer Neil Strauss noted, a “morality” play meant to demonstrate Ridley Scott’s solution to the twentieth-century political quagmire in the Middle East.¹⁴ Likewise, *The Passion of the Christ* is a modern equivalent of a medieval religious drama, encouraging affective piety in order to pain its audience into Mel Gibson’s version of pre-Vatican II religious contemplation. And *King Arthur*’s preoccupation with very modern notions of liberty, freedom, and duty appeals to dominant political values in contemporary America. Nevertheless, the basic plots of these movies are often culled from the great narratives of Western historical imagination, such as those centering on the Trojan War, Alexander the Great, and the like. At least a few historians believe, like the filmmakers, that King Arthur was a Roman general, Lucius Artorius Castus, who led a garrison of Sarmatian soldiers along Hadrian’s Wall.¹⁵ This premise offers them the opportunity to position their story for the present soundly in the materially historical past.

The story is not, in the end, the locus of the historical imagination in these films. To someone like John Matthews, the feel and look of the past—not the story of the legendary Arthur—are what make History. For historical films to have such blatantly modern messages, producers aspire to maintain an accurate historical realism in the film. Though the creators of the films may see direct parallels between contemporary concerns and historical situations, they anticipate that audiences might not. Therefore, if the stories themselves are not the conveyors of historical fact, they must be presented to the audience as if they are, through their visual plausibility; the Trojan War presented in *Troy* is fought as if it were the actual one, operating in terms of the “real” world (with the accumulation of dirt on the face of a fighting warrior read as if it were actually

the product of ancient military activity, or the sound of the creaking Trojan Horse, rolling through the gates of Troy, as if it were produced by the immense weight of wood and war, and not by post-production effects). Within the reality constructed by the film, viewers believe they are seeing the real Trojan War, regardless of modifications of literary or historical records. And the unspoken contract between the filmmakers and the audience, encouraging the audience's willing suspension of disbelief, must not be broken. The story does not follow the morality or psychology of the historical time period that it depicts, so it must follow the laws of the visual, in order to maintain its air of historical plausibility. This dependence on the visual explains, in part, why modern filmic depictions of historical stories also inherently stray from the central, mythological core of these narratives, so that no magical bolts of lightening come out of Excalibur in *King Arthur*, nor does the goddess Athena help Achilles kill Hector in *Troy*. For Matthews, the material reality of the actual set pieces—the armor, the swords, even the horses—is what produced the experience of being (very nearly) in fifth-century England. So long as the reproduction of the material setting is historically accurate, from his perspective, it can convince us that it is capturing the original moment.

The original moment can be difficult to reproduce to the satisfaction of both the past and the present. After arriving on the set of *King Arthur*, Matthews realized that the markings used by the set designers to decorate Arthur's legendary sword, Excalibur, were Saxon runes. Adamantly rejecting them, since the Anglo-Saxons were the enemy of the Britons and thus of Arthur, he suggested using Ogham markings, the alphabet used to write Celtic languages such as that spoken by the early Britons. This semblance of authenticity through attention to visual historical accuracy is one of the most identifiable tenets of historical filmmaking. Ironically, however, in the case of Arthur's sword, this accuracy created a fissure in the willing suspension of disbelief, so it had to be forfeited: someone on the set, when shown a sketch of Excalibur with the Ogham markings, was horrified that they looked to modern eyes like notches on a gun butt, a psychotic killer's tally of his victims. So, as Matthews recalled in an interview, he "worked through it, and ended up with a great inscription on the blade of the sword, which says 'defender of the land.' My wife came up with that."¹⁶ Ultimately, the physical appearance of history must be translated into terms that the modern audience can recognize, if not understand.

The concern with historically accurate archaeological detail reveals an anxiety about the possibility of knowing and conveying the truth of the past. Even as we have accumulated much information about the different times that have preceded us, this knowledge comes mainly in the form of physical remains and of texts written by those who lived at the time, or those who followed them. These sources of information are problematic for different, though related, reasons: the texts left to the future not only require interpretation, but their reliability is compromised, since "the past is as closed a book to the people who were present when it happened as it is to later generations."¹⁷ Not only are people from the past prevented from speaking to us directly across the years because of the ambiguity of language and the cultural distance between the past and present, but their descriptions written from within their own time are as subjective as are modern reconstructions of the past. Archaeological evidence can appear, in contrast, to promise objective,

unmediated knowledge. Whereas the story a twelfth-century historian tells about a battle may, to modern eyes, lack veracity because it is accompanied by a description of one of the leaders being 140 years old, the leader's sword, discovered during a dig, seems to speak directly and without qualification. The transparency of material remains has been questioned by archaeologists who, building on certain revelations of postmodern thought, have challenged such positivistic expectations of artifacts, demonstrating that they must be interpreted just like documents. However, faith in material objectivity continues to dominate academic archaeology and, even more powerfully, popular understanding.¹⁸ From this perspective, the past can be most reliably known through the materiality of our predecessors' daily lives, while the stories they told about themselves and the documentation they left behind raise many unanswerable questions. Hence the movies' preoccupation with perceived archaeological accuracy. Much has been said over the last quarter-century about the fact that, as Claude Levi-Strauss demonstrated, "the past can never be experienced in any unmediated way."¹⁹ Archaeological accuracy seems to offer the possibility of an unmediated glimpse, but as Levi-Strauss also wrote, "The historian and the agent of history choose, sever, and carve [historical events] up, for a truly total history would confront them with chaos. . . . History is therefore never history, but always history for."²⁰ All we can fully "know," given more modern demands for objectivity, are the kinds of bowls out of which first-century Romans ate or the kinds of textiles and methods of farming available to fifth-century Irish laborers. As a result, we cannot avoid feeling what Eco calls "the imperceptibility of underlying social and technological structures" or of "the forms of everyday life"²¹ in the past. Much of life as it was lived can be understood by us only through reproducing, based on archaeological evidence, the stage on which it occurred; on that stage we can observe stories that may or may not have happened the way we (can only) imagine them.

The tangible remains of the past seem to offer certain and stable knowledge, in contrast to the immaterial and shifting stories and legends through which the Arthurian past has traditionally been transmitted. From these remains can be constructed as a consistent depiction of the past that History can offer as the true story. This seems to be the ideology of the curators of Bede's World, the museum and archaeological re-creation in Jarrow, Northumbria, where Bede lived and worked 1,300 years ago. The museum site centers around seventh- and eighth-century "finds from the excavations of the site of St Paul's monastery" and also houses the Gyrwe Anglo-Saxon demonstration farm, offering intimate and archaeological knowledge of the lives of those who lived there.²² Bede's World claims historical accuracy based on archaeological certitude. History holds a privileged position because of its claim to truth, despite its etymological closeness to "story"; it is more than *only* story because, unlike fiction, it is understood as arising not solely from a writer's imagination but from his or her observation and scholarly understanding of the past. However, history must be communicated through narrative, the rhetorical form best suited to the representation of events in time.²³ Nancy Partner, following the work of Hayden White, demonstrates how narrative history is, unavoidably, a type of narrative fiction, albeit one with a claim to truthfulness. Echoing the title of White's widely influential book on historical representation, *The Content of the Form*, fiction is "the creation of form in language"

that is necessary “to all depictions of events” because otherwise “history is not conceivable.”²⁴ An event, occurring in time, cannot be understood and conveyed without perceiving it through that temporal sequence, a perception that is communicated by means of narrative. Historiography is thus produced through “fictional invention,” the “imaginative construction of events, speech and so on beyond the knowledge of the writer.”²⁵ The creation of a narrative from any set of data—whether the data consists of ideas, documents, or a set of recorded historical “facts”—is fictive formulation, even if the historical text claims not to be. Monika Otter notes the subtle but important distinction that it is “not a function of truth *value* but of truth *claim*: not whether it corresponds to fact . . . but how it asks to be taken by the reader.”²⁶ These claims to truth, in the form of (often implicitly) “announced limitations and accepted restrictions,” are the only distinction between fiction as fiction and fiction as truth-claim narrative.²⁷ But since we associate narrative with storytelling, and story with imagination, the use of imagination in the presentation of history complicates historical narrative’s role in conveying the supposedly concrete truths of the past. To tell a story, in our culture, is to make something up.

This relationship has not always been perceived as such a complicated one. Partner notes that for ancient historians, history (like fiction) was naturally a “subspecies of rhetoric”²⁸ that depended upon narrative for its very existence. As classical historiography scholar Anthony J. Woodman explains, “To our modern way of thinking it seems very strange to insist that the hard core [of facts] should be true when the elaboration of that hard core is by definition (in our terms) false. Yet clearly matters did not present themselves this way to the ancients.”²⁹ Whereas the very act of representation through narrative seems, to modern theorists, to falsify the truth contained in the data, it had no such effect on classical historians: Herodotus’s “use of small-scale fictions in the form of dramatized anecdotes involving details of action, invented speeches and conversations, the dreams and thoughts of long-dead persons, did not subvert or overwhelm the narrative . . . ‘history.’”³⁰ The necessity of fiction to narrativization has not changed since the classical age, but the discomfort with that necessity has. Partner emphasizes that the historian participates in a historical dialectic that relies on fictionalization even as it doubts its veracity. Despite its desire for verifiable facts, history remains subjective and rooted in fiction. Of course, history attempts to arrive at the best story possible—the least embellished, the best documented—but it remains a story; Peter Munz contends that interpretive and discretionary narrating must occur since “the past does not lie ready for our inspection,” and a “story about the past is a construction and as such it has no obvious truth value, for as a construction it cannot possibly simply correspond to what has actually happened.”³¹

Sword-and-sandal blockbusters are generally considered fiction, and thus not historical in the literal sense. Historical or literary scholars tend not to view *Troy*, for instance, as a historical film (or even as a faithful depiction of Homer’s poetry). Yet it is based on the history of the Trojan War, the most common sources of which are the epics of Homer and Virgil, typically considered as both literary masterpieces and meaningful representations of an ancient past. The movie’s narrative, like Homer’s, is produced from a set of data depicted via imaginative creation, which does not diminish its historical authority, according to

postmodern narratological theory, any more than Homer's imagination diminished the reconstruction of events out of his own deep history. What makes the *Iliad* a historical representation and *Troy* merely a fictional movie, to popular audiences, has nothing to do with the relative fictionality of the respective texts and everything to do with the degree of historical authenticity that audiences grant the poem over the movie. For even if audiences grant that a verisimilar text is historically plausible, the audience will favor the authenticity of a text that has been, for thousands of years, considered valid. Thus audiences who knew the *Iliad* were disturbed at the lack of integration of the Homeric elements that operate, for them, as the truth against which later (particularly contemporary) narratives must be read.

Even so, while the only "history" many see in the sword-and-sandal film is the historical backdrop on which the story is hung, the film implicitly markets itself as a history because of the "protocol . . . for historicity in the visual media."³² This particular historical protocol is often conveyed in terms of visual cues, rather than, as in written history, through verbal cues; these visual cues fulfill modern expectations of "reality" (associated with artifacts) and thus counteract the instability of meaning that postmodern thought has brought to the historical enterprise. These visual cues help to uphold the unspoken contract, the willing suspension of disbelief, because built into the visual medium of the sword-and-sandal movies are truth-claim announcements regarding the recreation of the material context in which "history" is believed to have occurred. The filmmakers of *Troy* took special care to recreate the height and breadth of the city walls according to the closest specifications that archaeology could provide, and on the set of *King Arthur*, costume designers carefully outfitted the king in Roman clothing from late antiquity. The tendency of sword-and-sandal movies to pay, perhaps, the most historical attention to visuals, to reproductions of historical artifacts, is the historical protocol that transforms the film's overt fictionality into historical "reality."

Another aspect of the historical protocol of sword-and-sandal films comes from the inter-borrowing of the visual language of the genre by supposedly legitimate historical outlets, such as the popular cable TV channel The History Channel. The series of programs "History vs. Hollywood," in which each episode questions the historical veracity of a single Hollywood film, uses footage from films such as *Troy* or *King Arthur* in order to discuss the historicity of the respective depiction. Throughout these shows the narrator will often acknowledge the fictionality of the movie, yet the formal elements of the TV show undercut any explicit separation of fiction and history. The syntax of history on the History Channel—the historical protocol—has been borrowed from the syntax of Hollywood: Hollywood actors narrating the TV programs, scenes filmed on Hollywood film sets, cinematic (and *not* TV) camera angles, and the 1.85:1 aspect ratio that creates the letterboxed effect on the TV screen of a Hollywood film. The syntax of popular narrative film is familiar to a movie-going audience, and The History Channel has adopted it in order to appeal to that market. Therefore, the appropriation of Hollywood's visual style for use in the kind of genuine historical analysis the History Channel claims to provide results in a backward translation for the movie-literate audience, which then approaches sword-and-sandal films aware of their now-privileged status as holders of (at least *some*) academic historical truth.

With its American political views, post-Reformation theological framework (and related anti-Catholic undertones), and postcolonial politics, *King Arthur* is an extreme example of this quality of sword-and-sandal movies: the movie makes *overt* claims to actual academic historicity, while the narrative itself is thoroughly anachronistic. The historical consultant's faith in the historicity of the film relies upon seeing its twenty-first-century audience as desiring the *real* Arthur based on the assumption that our (more "scientific") methods for pursuing Arthur are (in contrast to all who preceded us) disinterested and objective, and as a result *our* Arthur will be the *real* Arthur.

In the Middle Ages a strict conception of historical truth as singular and virtually tangible did not exist. The ways that medieval society conceived of historical truth and the multiple sources of historical truths are suggested by medieval writers' responses to historical texts. Historical truth could come in several forms, not all of which meet our post nineteenth-century modern expectations of veracity and objectivity. In particular, fiction held much more potential for conveying truth in the medieval period than we grant it now. This greater range of acceptability of what was considered historically true is seen in historical Arthurian texts. These texts were considered by medieval audiences to contain distinct historical truths, even while they were also understood to be, at least in part, based in legend. A widely read text in fourteenth-century England was the Stanzaic *Morte Arthure*, which, like Malory's fifteenth-century *Le Morte Darthur*, drew its material from the centuries-long continental and English Arthurian oral traditions. These two texts exemplify the narrative history tradition of medieval England: they center around the human relationships of the members of Arthur's courts, the experiences of his knights in chivalric encounters rather than in war, and the effect that individual relationships (and potentially love) had on the narrative of Arthur's kingship. Medieval historiography valued this narrative tradition alongside the chronicle tradition. Arthurian chronicles tend to focus on the political history of King Arthur's court and his expansionist practices, including his foray onto the Continent in battle with Rome. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum britannie* established this tradition in the twelfth century, followed in the fourteenth by the *Alliterative Morte*, among others. Geoffrey's chronicle version of Arthur's history was often consciously chosen as a central source for other historical texts. Sir Thomas Gray, for instance, when writing his *Scalacronica* in the fourteenth century, consistently brought his history in line with the events depicted in Geoffrey's, prefacing the inclusion of information not found in that chronicle with the ambiguous delineation of its having come from "*ascouns cronicles*," upholding Geoffrey as highly authoritative.³³ Of course that attitude is not unanimous; a significant number of medieval and later authors were highly critical of Geoffrey's inclusion of the prophesies of Merlin. Yet they shared a foundation for their truth-claims that offered a historical authority to writers of romance. Writers of both romance and history base their claims of veracity not in the verifiability of the events they narrate but in one of two traditions: the ongoing textual tradition, "the continual circulation and compilation of texts," as Robert M. Stein describes it, or the authorial one, "the work of the author, an expert who can sign his work as his own."³⁴ Geoffrey positions himself as specifically and uniquely authorized because he has Walter's book from which to work, and he insists that William

of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntington have no right to offer versions of the lives of the British kings because unlike him they do not have this authoritative text as their foundation.³⁵ However problematic to us, marvelous elements that clearly originated in Geoffrey's chronicle appear within later Arthurian narrative histories, chronicles, and romances, well into the seventeenth century.³⁶ Medieval history distinguishes between the chronicle and the narrative, while positioning both as different yet equally valuable. That distinction comes from their stylistic qualities, not from their relative claims to historical truth.

Medieval chronicler Andrew Wyntoun explains that the particular form of the historical narrative depends upon audience expectations, rather than upon the truth content of the text itself. In the prologue to his fourteenth-century *Original Chronicle of Scotland*, Wyntoun describes two contrasting forms of such writing. The first is ornate: "As Gwydo de Calumpna quhile, / The pohete Omere and Virgile, / Fairly formyt there trefyß, / And curiously dytit there storyis."³⁷ The second is in a plain style: "Sum vsit bot in plane maner / Off aire done dedis thar mater / To writ, as did Dares of Frigy, / That wrait of Troy all þe story, / Bot in till plane and opin stile, / But curiose wordis or subtile."³⁸ Richard Moll notes that Wyntoun aligns himself, as a chronicler, with the "plane and opin" style of Dares and not the "faire" style of Homer, Virgil, and Guido. For Wyntoun the plain style "is as much a guarantee of...accuracy as the citation of venerable authorities."³⁹ In contrast, Wyntoun depicts his contemporary Huchown of the Auld Ryall, in his *Gest of Arthure*,⁴⁰ as having a style "curiously dytit" and, as a result, as being more concerned with poetics than with accuracy.⁴¹ Based on style and attendant priorities, Wyntoun distinguishes between the chronicle that he is writing and the narrative history that Huchown is writing, allowing Huchown factual errors (such as giving Lucius an incorrect title). But this stylistic difference does not for him determine either text's historical legitimacy. The "faire" style of Homer, Virgil, Guido, and Huchown conveys truth just as his own simple style does, since he does not dismiss Huchown as unhistorical. The influence of rhetorical finesse and methodological precision was also noted in the twelfth century by Gervase of Canterbury, who states that "[t]he form of writing is varied, since the historian proceeds diffusely and elegantly, but the chronicler proceeds simply and briefly."⁴² Gervase refers to the narrative historian without qualifying him by the form of his production, thus seeing "historian" and "chronicler" as taking different approaches to the same task. Gervase's distinction demonstrates that, to him, "both the chronicle and the history seek to relay truth," aligning himself in advance with postmodern historians arguing for the inherently narrative form of history.⁴³

Even with a distinction being made marking these two stylistic forms of history, a dependency on narrative techniques by both blurs such distinctions.⁴⁴ Laurie Finke and Martin Shichtman note that in the Middle Ages there is a more direct relationship between chronological histories and more overtly narrative texts—including romances—resulting in an inter-borrowing of the narrative techniques of both. Arthurian historiography in the Middle Ages witnessed the "historicization of romance and the romanticization of history."⁴⁵ Dealing historically with a person who is more commonly found in non-historical genres (legends, fictions, imaginative romances), historical chronicles often adopted a form that is less like chronicle and more like a narrative history or romance.

Traditional Arthurian chronicles such as Geoffrey's *Historia regum brittaniae* often structure their narrative as a chronology, moving from event to event, or in his case, from *rex brittaniae* to *rex brittaniae*—beginning with (the mythical) Brutus and following through (the legendary) Arthur to (the verifiably historical) Cadwallader. However, as the chronicle approaches the reign of Arthur, clearly the central reign for Geoffrey and not just for modern readers of Geoffrey, it takes on characteristics we associate with narrative history and romances, as it is interested in both the political history of Arthur and the inner workings of his court as well as Merlin's prophecies, for example.

One claim that cannot be substantiated concerning the medieval historical imagination is that it was hegemonic. The impression of muddiness and ambiguity as to what is historically valid is as much a result of postmodern critiques of historiography that have highlighted a distrust of narrative as a transmitter of historical truth as it is the result of the fact that medieval narratives are rhetorically complex and often cite discordant historical philosophies. Giving weight to the argument that in narrative we can encounter historical truth, Sir Thomas Gray said of romances and other narratives generally considered unhistorical that there "we can more fully hear the great history of Arthur";⁴⁶ for Gray, narrative is unequivocally able to offer historical truth, though the type of historical truth that it may offer is distinct from that which a chronicle might offer. The romances and other narratives offer a fuller version of Arthur's history, one that would take into account human history and emotional connection—not just political conquest and expansion. Gray's view was, apparently, shared by some scribes who, in copying chronicles, would insert stories that might have been at cross-purposes with the chronicler's expectations of historical narrative. The Anglo-Norman historian Wace lamented in his *Roman de Brut* that the twelve-year period of peace after Arthur had unified England had, in those chronicles that follow Geoffrey, become a catchall for legends and fantastic narratives, such as the story of the young knight Percival: "In this great peace of which I speak (I don't know if you have heard) there were marvels proved and adventures found, which have been so often told about Arthur that they have been turned into fables, neither all falsehood nor all truth, neither all foolish, nor all wise. So much have the storytellers told stories, and so much have the fablers told fables, in order to embellish their stories, that everything has been made to seem like a fable."⁴⁷ Wace is concerned that the authenticity of historical chronicle was being infected by the fabulous fictions with which it had become associated. But at least one fifteenth-century scribe did not share his concern. When working on the *Roman*, this scribe inserted the complete works of Chrétien de Troyes into that period of peace, making no distinction between Wace and Chrétien, history and fable. Similarly, a scribe working on Robert Mannyng's fourteenth-century *Chronicle* inserted eighty-two lines of the popular romance of *Havelok* in the spot where Mannyng had declared that he could find no corroborated evidence for its inclusion in his history.⁴⁸ These scribes seem to be echoing Gray's statement that history can be more fully found in even the self-consciously fictive romances.

Such a sentiment is not likely to be expressed by a historian today. This disparity between modern and medieval conceptions of history can be traced to the shift in expectations guiding the presentation of history that occurred in the nineteenth century following the work of the German historian Leopold von

Ranke, when history became an area of “social scientific” academic study⁴⁹ and pursued scientific objectivity, despite its residence in the Humanities (alongside history’s sibling, literature). Hayden White discusses how it “constituted . . . a kind of science” after “the profession of [the] historian [was] disciplinized, moved into the universities and academies, endowed with the status of *Wissenschaft*.”⁵⁰ Given the dominance of positivism within nineteenth-century thought, this new status required of history a systematic methodology that legitimized its conclusions as empirically based. History’s rhetorical form, narrative, presented a great obstacle to this goal; however, the new demands of history also coincided with the birth of realist fiction, in which mimetic representation was achieved through scientific precision and verisimilar depiction. These parallel developments in history and fiction were encouraged by the increasing demands for objectivity (e.g., Freudian Psychoanalysis and Darwinism) within post-Enlightenment culture more broadly. Historical narrative borrowed from realist fictional narrative the latter’s mimetic techniques. For instance, Maurice Samuels writes that, although scholars “have long seen the arrival in France of [Sir Walter] Scott’s works [in 1826] . . . as a vital moment in literary history,” they “overlook how Scott’s novels intersected with larger trends in historical representation at the time.”⁵¹ Samuels argues that the influence of Scott’s novels combined with another trend in historical representation—the so-called visual spectacles of the panorama and wax displays—to produce the visually realistic trend that swept the narrative histories of post-Revolutionary France. Demands that histories employ visually realistic representation mean that medieval historiographers’ lack of mimetic representation and, by extension, objectivity, makes medieval histories difficult for modern readers to access. Despite the fact that, as Monika Otter notes, verisimilar fiction tells a story that is no more true than that told by fiction which does not use realistic representation (such as fantasy or science fiction),⁵² modern audiences equate mimetic representation with the truth, to the point where, as Finke and Shichtman conclude, “For the most part, modern historians have been skeptical about the integrity of the histories written during the Middle Ages, preferring to rely on supposedly more ‘objective’ archival material” and artifacts.⁵³

Artifacts and archival documentation, with their appearance of objectivity, offer a source of information for modern historiographers that allows them to represent their material as factually based rather than as derived from subjective historiographies produced by writers of earlier periods. They also allow for a rigid distinction to be made between history and literature, between fact and fiction, regardless of their shared rhetorical mode of narrative. Certainly postmodern thought has influenced contemporary history to the extent that White can write that “historical inquiry is born less of the necessity to establish that certain events occurred than of the desire to determine what certain events might mean for a given group, society, or culture’s conception of its present tasks and future prospects.”⁵⁴ Yet dominant within contemporary history, particularly in popular historiography, is a belief that the subject of history is non-discursive, that its domain is the facts—that certain events and people existed and performed the deeds revealed to us by history. The purpose of history is not, according to this view, to understand how people in the past understood themselves, but rather to know, for a fact, that certain individuals existed and certain events occurred. These quantifiable and objectively apprehended pieces of knowledge are represented using mimetic techniques borrowed

from realist fiction, thereby positioning history as an objective science of the past. For example, in the tradition of Sir Walter Scott and his influence on continental European historiography, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, the three-volume history by the widely popular American Civil War historian (and novelist) Shelby Foote, presents the story of the Civil War in terms of the realist historical novel—with which the author is well acquainted, given his previous experience as a novelist. In fact, critics of the book complain that Foote did not “adhere to the rigors of historical scholarship” in, among other things, not using footnotes. The form of representation—realist prose—and Foote’s lack of footnotes (suggesting that these facts speak for themselves) emphasize the popular belief in the objective non-discursivity of history.

While realist fictional strategies helped modern history avoid the impression of subjectivity, the shift to a reliance on artifacts and archival documentation more powerfully insists that truth can be directly and unambiguously known, giving the body of knowledge built up around them an aura of objectivity. According to Richard Moll, the significance of material artifacts was felt in the Middle Ages as well. Not surprisingly, Arthur’s influence on the medieval imagination made him a figure for relic-chasers, who saw the benefits to be gained from the visible display of physical artifacts supposedly connected to Arthur. Henry II, for instance, exhumed the supposed remains of Arthur and Guinevere in order to quell Celtic revivals of a messianic Arthur.⁵⁵ In this action we see the pointed, specific response of one man to a cultural trend based in a literary tradition, and the way in which a created set of physical remains and their accompanying created history work together toward a political agenda. Sir Thomas Gray, when writing his *Scalacronica*, would make a point to use factual evidence to direct his history; the death of Gawain was altered from the account in his source in order to bring it in line with the obvious head wound on the supposedly preserved skull of Gawain at Glastonbury Cathedral.⁵⁶ The powerful claim to truth held by the material remains of the past (even when bogus)—as well as the accompanying attempts to distance this reliable information from the taint of fictional narrative, or from the *wrong* fictional narrative—is reflected in the movie *King Arthur* and especially in *The Quest for King Arthur*, the documentary aired by the History Channel. The movie begins with the initial claim that “[r]ecently discovered archaeological evidence sheds light on his real identity,” and although the movie itself does not parlay this archaeological evidence, nor does it even explain what this evidence might indicate about Arthur, it uses this observation, along with the claim of the trailer and other promotional materials, to dismantle the traditional narrative of King Arthur and replace it with one unfamiliar to most audiences. Within the blockbuster event that is *King Arthur*, the popular faith in material evidence as conveying immediate truth is used immediately, even as it is often employed to present fictional and mythic stories that are actually supported by no such evidence.

Whereas contemporary historiography borrows the discursive techniques of realist fiction,⁵⁷ a popular historical film like *King Arthur* is able to use the more forceful techniques of the visual medium. These allow the narrative to be immersed in what appears to be a highly factual (and therefore more “real”) environment, one that leads the audience to believe, even if only for a moment, that what they are seeing in fact happened. The camera in *Kingdom of Heaven* shakes as the battering ram hits the door leading into Jerusalem, creating the appearance

that the camera was actually there, the cameraman straining to stand upright, as the Muslims besieged the city. Visual depictions that encourage somber emotional responses—for instance the pain on Arthur's face as he remembers his parents' murder—make, according to Torben Grodal, the fictional reality of a movie more real to the audience.⁵⁸ Freud, in fact, called the emotional responses connected to pain “the reality principle opposed to the pleasure principle.”⁵⁹ *King Arthur* director Antoine Fuqua says that the focus of the visual design is to sustain the “realness and grittiness” of his imagined fifth-century England, essentially equating the two.⁶⁰ A dark, damp, and dirty (and therefore alliteratively dangerous) Middle Ages means that “vital human . . . concerns [are] at stake,”⁶¹ and thus to be gritty, dirty, muddy, and dark would encourage, unsurprisingly, not a mirthful reaction but a somber one, making realism (at least in the visual medium) more authentic. Combine this serious tone of the movie with the attention to artifactual reality, the rebuilt “real [Hadrian's] Wall,” for example,⁶² and the film is able to construct, through its visual nature, a compelling reality.

Sustaining the various texts that comprise the blockbuster *King Arthur*—including the movie itself, the version of the film marketed in its trailers, the documentary tie-in, the *Times* insert promoting the documentary—are the legends of Arthur. Their cultural capital is used in order to lure in viewers, but once that has been accomplished, they are left behind. A central Arthurian moment, the sword in the stone, recurs in the film, the documentary, and the trailers for the film, with a distrust of its fictionality underlying each use of it. One trailer for the movie shows the young Arthur running to pull out the sword, while the voiceover states, “Countless tales have been told of King Arthur and his knights.” The voiceover continues, “but the only story you've never heard is the true story,” and at that moment—when the words “true story” are spoken—Arthur appears in his full Roman battle-garb, showing that, in fact, the “countless stories,” whatever purpose they may have served in their own time and whatever value they offer future generations, are inferior to the gritty, dark, and thus “real” history that the movie proclaims it will present.⁶³ This single scene of the young boy running for the sword metonymically invokes the whole mythic system of Arthur, specifically in order to dispel it.

To do this, the movie situates this scene in history rather than myth. The exact same scene used in the trailer appears in the film, but in this case it is placed at a specific moment in the (historical) narrative, its meaning and significance coming from the events that precede it, rather than from the associations with which the scene has been invested by legend. Young Arthur, whose mother is being attacked, grabs the nearest available sword, which is implanted not in a stone but a burial mound. The special significance of this sword is simply hereditary, the fact that it was his father's; the narrative makes no gesture toward its traditional significance as a sign of Arthur's secret and magically-invested authority. The movie demythologizes a key moment of the Arthurian legend, changing it from the pseudo-mythical action that traditionally authorizes him as king to one simply motivated by immediate personal need. In the process, it makes the act more believable and meaningful to twenty-first-century viewers, who accept the importance of a dead father's remains and the need for a sword when protecting one's home from attackers, but who have difficulty accepting or appreciating the power of magic. Yet the film depends upon us to bring an awareness of the

mythic meaning to the movie, so that the action is invested with significance that is more than purely historical, but only by implication and only by us.

The way the documentary uses this legendary scene makes explicit the implications of the film's use of the same scene: it refuses to find truth in myth and seeks elsewhere. At one point, the narrator begins, "In legend, King Arthur won his crown in a magical test; the sword in the stone would become an icon of British unity, the instrument by which a righteous prince revived a shattered land. But in the true history of the age of Arthur, unity and revival could not be pulled out of an enchanted rock. Salvation for the Britons could only be forged in blood, the blood of the invading Saxons."⁶⁴ Swords pulled out of stones are the stuff of imagination, out of which "true history" cannot be produced. Yet many of the sources the documentary relies upon for its historical information are in fact generally recognized as products of the imagination. Throughout the documentary a careful distinction is made between histories and non-histories, referred to as "so-called histories," but the distinction is based on the needs of the documentary. For instance, texts that are traditionally (and unambiguously) considered romances—and thus from our vantage point specifically unhistorical—are presented in the documentary as "true histories" so they may be used to make truth-claims. This is not to say that fictions are unable to offer historical truths; however, the documentary would seek to strip them of their fictionality, extracting historical information while denying legendary stories. For example, in a discussion of chivalry, the documentary acknowledges the additions that "troubadours from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries" made to the Arthurian tradition that transformed the "British warrior into the model medieval monarch," but only in order to use them as a vehicle for tracing the rise of chivalry and the political advantage of the mounted knight.⁶⁵ Those fictions that suit the producers' historical goals are depicted as reliable historical sources: Malory's romance, for instance, is never called a romance, and when it is used as a source for information that is presented as historically valid, the material is prefaced by "according to Malory's book"—which, the narrator says, is "not merely a fairy tale" because it is "rooted in history." However, it is also—and more strongly, from our perspective—rooted in romance. Yet at key moments, the documentary presents Malory's narrative as a direct conveyor of historical events, with Malory not as author but mere amanuensis: "the reign of King Arthur as recorded by Thomas Malory in the fifteenth century." Those that do not support the documentary's goals, such as the early (pre-twelfth-century) historiographies that make no mention of Arthur, are deemed "so-called histories." Similarly, Geoffrey's *Historia* is given this label (although his chronicle is considered valid elsewhere in the documentary) when the absence of Camelot and Lancelot in his text is highlighted: "'so-called' histories made no mention of a Round Table, or a Camelot." This disparity threatens to reveal the manufactured nature of all of the "histories" upon which the documentary relies for its information about Arthur and his court. Calling it "so-called" contains the threat. Ironically, the reason Lancelot is not present in Geoffrey's text is that he enters the story in the later fictional development of the legend of Arthur: Lancelot first appears in Chrétien decades after Geoffrey's *Historia* was completed. The documentary even acknowledges this at one point, saying that "written history from this period makes no mention of the glories of Camelot,

the fellowship of the Round Table, or the love of Lancelot and Guinevere, the captivating touchstones of Arthurian myth." However, those histories that do not mention Lancelot or Camelot are later deemed "so-called" when it suits the documentary's purposes.

The final segment of the documentary concludes the frustrating quest for Arthur "the man" with the lure of future "knowledge": although "after fifteen centuries the trail might seem to have run cold...even today you can catch a new glimpse of the man behind the king" because historians have found "a tantalizing new clue" through archival research of Roman records.⁶⁶ This clue is information about a fifth-century British king, Riothamus, who received a request from Roman officials to help fight off the barbarians.⁶⁷ This information is presented in "unsolved mysteries" fashion, as if it offers the potential answer to the question being pursued throughout the program. Archival inquiry is the preferred method of historical sleuthing for post-nineteenth-century History, which gives Riothamus a status that the legendary Arthur could never have. Once again, however, the power of this historical information is, contrary to the documentary's stated aims, conveyed in terms of the legend: the narrator concludes that "unlike Geoffrey's almighty Arthur, this historic king of the Britons never returned home. Records suggest Riothamus died en route to a town called"—and here the music swells, and the narrator pauses for a beat before he continues—"Avalon." It is in this emotional climax, leading us through this newly discovered historical figure to the legendary magical resting place of Arthur, that the documentary simultaneously provides both a historical origin for the legend and the possibility that the legend could be real. In one stroke it demythologizes and remythologizes the figure of Arthur.

This moment concludes the documentary in an unexpected way. Throughout the program the power of fiction is clear even as the documentary depicts that power as threatening to the supposed truth. Brynn Walters, a commentator, says that the real history of Arthur lies "beneath the mire of romantic fiction" that has obscured the true story, and the documentary appears to share that view.⁶⁸ The aim of history, the documentary tells us throughout, is to uncover that which is lost—the supposedly real origins of the Arthurian legend. We are, at the start of the program, invited to join the documentary's producers on "a quest through history and myth to find the lost British warlord we remember as King Arthur." Yet in the end the documentary concedes that we can find that origin, that remembrance of what is lost, only through the legends. The last scene of *King Arthur* shows that the movie recognizes the value of legend, too, albeit as a way for history to be more richly conveyed. The narrative is framed by voiceovers provided by the wholly fictional Lancelot, who, at the beginning, claims that "I was one of those [King Arthur's] knights." At the end, despite the fact that he has been killed at Badon Hill, Lancelot asks: "And what of the knights who gave their lives? They live in the legends of Arthur and the Round Table."⁶⁹ The postmodern melding of the fifth-century reality of the film and the twenty-first-century reality of the audience suggests that the legends are valuable as tools for remembering the past, the truth *behind* the stories, which can only be encountered in history. The assumptions and goals shared by the film and the documentary point to the important cultural role of fiction and the limitations of history. "We just

don't have the evidence for a historical Arthur," admits commentator Christopher Snyder, and the narrator acknowledges that "[t]he legend he spawned far outstrips the deeds of any single man." The story of Arthur offers a multiple memories of not one man, but an essence, an impression of a man, of many men, all of which are "embodied in the quest for King Arthur."⁷⁰ Cultural memory has always been the function of legend, of stories. In fact, historians are encouraged to seek an actual, non-literary King Arthur because of the power of the more prominent and visible legend. The narrator of the documentary notes that, "If not for the storybook tragedy of Camelot, few scholars would ever pursue the quest to find the real King Arthur."⁷¹ However, as history is used to replace fiction in its role as cultural memory, the role of narrative and legend is undermined. As history does this today, it makes use of legend to get us close to that moment behind the legend, but it falls short, because the expectation is that history can perform what legend already does.

Notes

1. *King Arthur: Director's Cut*, DVD, directed by Antoine Fuqua (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2004).
2. *The Quest for King Arthur*, DVD, directed by Don Campbell for The History Channel (New York: Partisan Pictures, 2004).
3. "Special Advertising Supplement: The Quest for King Arthur," *The New York Times*, 27 June 2004: ZN2.
4. "Special Advertising Supplement," p. ZN2.
5. "Special Advertising Supplement," p. ZN3.
6. "Special Advertising Supplement," p. ZN3.
7. "Special Advertising Supplement," p. ZN2.
8. "King Arthur movie trailer—2:05 min.," on-line video, *Apple Quicktime*, http://www.apple.com/trailers/touchstone/king_arthur.html.
9. Tom Shippey proclaims that "the strident claims of historical truth made by the producers" of *King Arthur* "perhaps license one to say, in reply, that its history is at best dubious, and its geography frankly ludicrous. Nevertheless, it does offer an insight into the Hollywood medieval imaginary": "Fuqua's *King Arthur*: More Myth-Making in America," *Exemplaria* 18.2 (2006): 1 [1–14], <http://www.english.ufl.edu/exemplaria/movie/TS.htm>. Shippey's article details the film's thematic promotion of "freedom" and argues that this comes in response to the issues that have plagued American politics and identity since the Vietnam War, with Britain in the film representing Vietnam itself.
10. Jack Foley, "King Arthur, historical feature (John Matthews)," *Indie London*, http://www.indielondon.co.uk/film/king_arthur_history_feature.html.
11. Umberto Eco, "Dreaming the Middle Ages," in Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, 1990), p. 68.
12. Eco, "Dreaming the Middle Ages," p. 68.
13. Eco, "Dreaming the Middle Ages," pp. 68–69.
14. Neil Strauss, "Chasing Orlando," *The Rolling Stone*, 19 May 2005: 44.
15. Tom Shippey cites Kempe Malone's article, "Artorius," *Modern Philology* 22 (1925): 367–74, as the originator of the idea "that a Sarmatian cavalry unit had been based in the North of Britain, and commanded by Artorius Castus" ("More

- Myth-Making," 3). This idea was further developed by C. Scott Littleton and Linda A. Malcor, *From Scythia to Camelot: A Radical Reassessment of the Legends of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, and the Holy Grail* (New York: Garland, 2000), where they claim that the Sarmatians were the group of fighters represented by the Round Table (cited in Shippey, "More Myth-Making," 3). Malcor also worked with the screenwriter on *King Arthur* and is frequently interviewed in on-line discussions of science fiction and Arthuriana. In 1999 she wrote a series on Lucius Artorius Castus, the Roman Commander of 5,500 Sarmatian cavalrymen: "Lucius Artorius Castus, Part 1: An Officer and an Equestrian," *Heroic Age* 1 (1999) and "Lucius Artorius Castus, Part 2: Notes and Bibliography," *Heroic Age* 2 (1999); both articles are available at <http://www.heroicage.org>.
16. Foley, "King Arthur."
 17. Peter Munz, "The Historical Narrative," in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 869 [851–72].
 18. Post-processual archaeology (also known as ethno-archaeology) developed in archaeological studies in the 1980s to challenge the prevalent faith in the ability of artifacts to speak directly to modern viewers—and of viewers to look directly and objectively at the artifacts themselves. It critiques processual archaeology, which claims that artifacts are not simply pieces of the past left behind, but that they come with a story to tell, and that the story can be discovered by employing the scientific method. Post-processual archaeology maintains that the stories we find are directed by the questions we ask, themselves directed by the way we expect the world to operate, and by what we hold valuable and meaningful.
 19. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, *King Arthur and the Myth of History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), p. 11.
 20. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, trans. G. Weidenfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 257.
 21. Eco, "Dreaming the Middle Ages," p. 71.
 22. "Bede's World: Where History Was Made," *Bede's World*, <http://www.bedesworld.co.uk/index.php>.
 23. Munz goes to great lengths to draw a direct connection between the chronological underpinning of human experience in the past and narrativity. He resists the tendency of certain historians to "consider the past as a directionless heap of all the things that happen to be no longer here" insisting that "if we want to know [history]... and talk about it, it first has to be written up and turned into a story." Munz, "The Historical Narrative," p. 852.
 24. Nancy F. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 33 [21–39].
 25. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," p. 33.
 26. Monika Otter, "Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing," in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner, Writing History Series (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 112 [108–30].
 27. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," p. 33.
 28. Nancy Partner, "Medieval Histories and Modern Realism: Yet another Origin of the Novel," *MLN* 114 (1999): 864 [857–73]; this essay is reprinted in this volume.
 29. Anthony J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (Portland, OR: Areopagitica Press, 1988), p. 92.
 30. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," pp. 26–27.
 31. Munz, "The Historical Narrative," p. 865.
 32. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," p. 33.
 33. Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 63.

34. Robert M. Stein, *Reality Fictions: Romance, History, and Governmental Authority, 1025–1180* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), p. 166.
35. Stein, *Reality Fictions*, p. 165.
36. Finke and Shichtman, *King Arthur*, p. 40.
37. Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 88.
38. Moll, *Before Malory*, pp. 88–89.
39. Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 93.
40. None of Huchown's corpus remains.
41. Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 89.
42. Translated by Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 276, n65.
43. Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 94.
44. Stein, in *Reality Fictions*, points to further blurring: "the provocation to romance writing is the same as the provocation to history: they grow out of the same cultural need and intend to do the same cultural work," which he summarizes as "the need to make the secular world intelligible as driven by secular imperatives, no matter how mediated through varieties of religious discourses the process might be" (p. 2).
45. Finke and Shichtman, *King Arthur*, p. 9.
46. Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 63.
47. Translated by Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 16, n15.
48. Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 22.
49. Nancy Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 184.
50. Hayden White, "Literature against Fiction: Postmodernist History," *La Torre* 2.4–5 (1997): 195 [193–207].
51. Maurice Samuels, *The Spectacular Past: Popular History and the Novel in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 152.
52. Otter, "Functions of Fiction," p. 112.
53. Finke and Shichtman, *King Arthur*, p. 10.
54. Hayden White, "Historical Pluralism," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986): 487 [480–93].
55. Finke and Shichtman, *King Arthur*, p. 31.
56. Moll, *Before Malory*, p. 62.
57. Simon Schama, for instance, in his book *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculation* (Boston: Vintage Edition, 1992), "goes beyond...conventional histories to address the deeper enigmas that confront a student of the past," which he does by "reconstruct[ing]—and at times reinvent[ing]" historical events (back cover). As a result, he "inspires us...to examine our own assumptions about history and fiction" (*Newsday* review, quoted on back cover).
58. Torben Grodal, "The Experience of Realism in Audiovisual Representation," *Realism and "Reality" in Film and Media*, ed. Jane Jerslev (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), p. 87.
59. Grodal, "The Experience of Realism," p. 87.
60. "Blood on the Land: Forging *King Arthur*," produced by Katy Leigh, Laura Nix, and Jeffery Schwarz, Special Feature Documentary, *King Arthur: Director's Cut*.
61. Grodal, "The Experience of Realism," p. 87.
62. "Blood on the Land."
63. "King Arthur movie trailer—2:29 min.," on-line video, *Apple Quicktime*, http://www.apple.com/trailers/touchstone/king_arthur/trailer/.
64. *The Quest for King Arthur*.
65. *The Quest for King Arthur*.
66. *The Quest for King Arthur*.
67. Geoffrey Ashe, a commentator in *The Quest for King Arthur*, first suggested this reading of Riothamus as Arthur in "A Certain Very Ancient Book: Traces of an

Arthurian Source in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*," *Speculum* 56.2 (1981): 301–23. More recently, Ashe discussed this possible connection in "The Origins of the Arthurian Legend," *Arthuriana* 5.3 (1995): 1–24. See also his argument in support of the Riothamus thesis in his book *The Discovery of King Arthur* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1985).

68. *The Quest for King Arthur*.

69. *King Arthur*.

70. *The Quest for King Arthur*.

71. *The Quest for King Arthur*.

PART II

MEDIEVAL, REALITY, POLITICS

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CHAPTER 7

THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMATION IN BUSH'S AMERICA AND HENRY IV'S ENGLAND

Daniel T. Kline

Conditioned by the social dynamics of what Paul Virilio calls the “dromology” of contemporary society and by what Jacques Derrida terms the “logic of the supplement,” the Bush White House, similar to Henry IV’s Lancastrian regime, has configured a politics of the eternal present that covers over the absence of legitimate political authority.

When considering political practices across *la longue durée*, from the medieval period to the modern, from the English monarchy to the American presidency, one might consider a number of points of contact: the composition of elites who support those in power and upon whose power their status depends; the activities of political operatives whose efforts insulate those in power from accusation and danger; the motives of the economic oligarchies who most benefit from their candidates’ successes; the cross-generational family and kinship networks that engender power and benefit from those relationships; and many other factors that center upon the persons, structures, and processes of power. However, my point of reference between the medieval and modern periods concerns a defining absence at the center of two political moments and the discursive techniques used to traverse that gap.

In 1399, Henry of Bolingbroke, who was not in the line of royal succession though he was John of Gaunt’s eldest son, seized power from the reigning English king Richard II with the help of sympathetic aristocrats while Richard was on a military campaign. Henry then fashioned himself Henry IV. Six hundred years later, on 12 December 2001, the Supreme Court of the United States effectively appointed the president when, in a logically tortured opinion after a convoluted legal process, it ruled in favor of Bush in *Bush et al. v. Gore et al.* (Case No. 00-949).¹ The ruling ordered the Florida Supreme Court not to recount the contested Florida “undervote,” thus tipping the numbers in the electoral college in favor of Republican nominee George W. Bush.

Because they each assumed power under questionable circumstances, both Henry IV and George W. Bush faced a resulting gap in political credibility brought about by circumventing the customary channels of political succession. Much in the same way that Henry IV had to legitimate his dynastic rule and suture the breach in English monarchical accession after the death (and probable murder) of Richard II, so too George W. Bush has had to legitimate his administration in the face of the Supreme Court's unprecedented intervention in a presidential race.

According to the official parliamentary account, on 29 September 1399, Richard II voluntarily abdicated the English crown, and Bolingbroke claimed the empty throne in the sight of the assembled parliament and aristocracy by virtue of his relation to Henry III. The new king proffered Richard's signet as a warrant for his claim, and Archbishop Arundel of York preached a sermon "justifying the rejection of Richard the childlike . . . and the selection of the manful Henry."² Richard II was conveyed to the Tower of London and eventually to Pontefract Castle, where he was dead by 29 January 1400.³ However, the official account of the royal succession, the "Record and Process of the Renunciation of King Richard the Second after the Conquest, and the acceptance of the same renunciation together with the deposition of the same king," is essentially a Lancastrian fabrication.⁴ Other independent documents show that Henry, having no legitimate claim to the throne through birth, engineered a parliamentary coup, in which one branch of English government was used to overthrow power in another.⁵ As a result, even after Richard II's death, Henry IV, the new monarch, faced widespread skepticism as to the legitimacy of his rule. In 1402, as recorded in the *Eulogium Historiarum*, the new king himself questioned a rebellious Franciscan who supported Richard II's claim to the throne:

The King: Did you say that King Richard is alive?

Frisby: I do not say that he is alive, but I do say that if he is alive he is the true King of England.

The King: He abdicated.

Frisby: He did abdicate; but under compulsion while in prison, and that is not a valid abdication.

The King: He abdicated right willingly.

Frisby: He would have never resigned had he been at liberty. And a resignation made in prison is not a free resignation.

The King: Even so, he was deposed.

Frisby: While he was king, he was captured by force of arms, thrown into prison, despoiled of his realm, while you usurped his crown.

The King: I did not usurp the crown, but was duly elected.

Frisby: An election is null and void while the legitimate possessor is alive. And if he is dead, you killed him. And if you are the cause of his death, you forfeit all title and any right which you may have to the kingdom.

The King: By this head of mine, thou shalt lose thine!⁶

This dialogue illustrates, as is now well documented by historians, how Henry IV used a variety of justifications to substantiate his claim to Richard II's throne. Yet at the heart of Henry IV's claim—like his threat against Frisby—was a naked exercise of power, a power then legitimized and extended through an array of

discursive and political techniques, such as fabricated historical chronicles, favorable political prophecies, laudatory poems, and other forms of propaganda.

George W. Bush faced a similar credibility gap when he was appointed to the office of the president by judicial fiat. On election night, 7 November 2000, without the Florida vote in hand, Bush's 246 electoral votes trailed Al Gore's 255, and even though New Mexico's five and Oregon's seven electors were also in doubt for a time, Florida's twenty-five electoral votes would determine the presidential winner. Just as Henry IV's accession to the throne of England required the multiple interventions noted by Frisby that culminated in the physical removal of the previous monarch, so too Bush's victory via the contested Florida voting was convoluted at best, antidemocratic at worst, and politically suspect at least.⁷ In addition to the extended, labyrinthine legal maneuvering at the local, state, and national levels that occurred outside of public participation, the Republican victory in Florida resulted from: (1) *not recounting* 145,000 votes that were left uncounted by machine tabulation ("undervotes"); (2) *not reconsidering* the Palm Beach "butterfly ballot" that may have given Bush hundreds of votes intended for Pat Buchanan; (3) *not reassessing* in a consistent, uniform manner the thousands of punch-card ballots and their notorious "hanging chads"; (4) *stripping* more than 8,000 otherwise qualified persons (whose demographics largely favored Gore) from the rolls of legal voters because their names were similar to those of convicted felons; and (5) *adding* hundreds of incorrectly submitted absentee ballots (that overwhelmingly favored Bush). The automatic recount required by Florida law in such close elections ultimately was never carried out, and in a partisan ruling the U.S. Supreme Court found that a recount would violate the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution's "equal protection" clause. All told, the office of the president was decided by 537 votes, out of a total of 5,962,657 in Florida and 105,406,100 nationally.⁸

In *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399–1422*, Paul Strohm writes elegantly and persuasively about the political and symbolic mechanisms the Lancastrians employed to substantiate their claim to the English throne and to dissuade any criticism of their policies. My argument in this essay is that Bush's White House has adopted a series of comparable strategies, but suited to the digital age rather than a manuscript or chirographic culture. In fact, Strohm's central claim regarding the Lancastrians, it seems to me, could apply just as easily to the Bush administration:

These monarchs regularly engaged in what might be considered pre-emptive intervention in the practices by which discourse is produced and sustained, in places of daily social encounter and exchange, and finally even in the "private" space of the socially conditioned imagination. This intervention functions pre-emptively because its purpose is to prevent or otherwise crowd out unwelcome sorts of imaginative production—first simply by occupying and proliferating within their space, and second in a more complex process of contesting, revising, or even obliterating any alternative renditions of historical origin and title which might have been produced and sustained there. The characteristic Lancastrian discovery, as it bears on questions of ideology and history, is not just that rival accounts are vulnerable, but that . . . they never deserved the legitimacy they enjoyed in the first place. The Lancastrian imagination is thus recursive, in the sense that it asserts the claims of

a newly discovered but truer origin which continues through its effects to govern present arrangements.⁹

In Strohm's analysis, the discourses of Lancastrian legitimation are antecedent to the ideological scripts that oppose or complicate them, and these "official" accounts metastasize into the cultural, social, and even personal spaces within which alternative, critical accounts might flourish. The recursive nature of these symbolic practices thereby (re)creates the Lancastrian dynastic origin and historical lineage in a fictive past that naturalizes current political practices. Strohm notes that a key to the Lancastrian strategy is its preemptive aspect, for the Lancastrians knew history well and understood that their ascendancy required careful historical reinscription of their roles and the simultaneous denigration of their rivals, as in the Frisby account.

The Bush White House takes a different though analogous approach to the problem of history, for the administration has removed history as a problem by refashioning it in public discourse. The Bush administration's symbolic strategy for overcoming the crisis of legitimation posed by not clearly winning the 2000 election is not only preemptive, antecedent, and preparatory like the Lancastrians, but also proleptic—deferred, differential, and continually postponed—thus opening the way for continual improvisation in an incessant political present. As practiced by the Bush administration, history is overdetermined as primarily *synchronic* (through the vertical axis of time), a multilayered phenomenon of depth in the immediate and continual present, rather than a *diachronic* transit (through the horizontal axis of time) from past to future. If history, in the traditional sense, is invoked by the Bush administration, it is exactly as Strohm has described it for the Lancastrians: history functions as a justification for current practices and symbolically fills the ideological spaces available to other discourses, thus crowding out alternative accounts. In other words, history is selectively invoked in a traditional sense only to justify the current policies, and more importantly, the current discourses of power. Thus, for example, for the Bush administration, in its ever-shifting accounts of justification for the invasion of Iraq, the past exists only to justify present actions, and these justifications continually shift based upon the current political and ideological needs of the administration. Conditioned by the social dynamics of what Paul Virilio calls the "dromology" of contemporary society—that is, a culture built upon the logic of speed and velocity—and what Jacques Derrida terms the "logic of the supplement"—that is, the requirement that every text, whether spoken or written, be continually buttressed by additional texts, statements, images, and cultural products to stabilize and continually reinterpret its meaning—the Bush White House has configured a *politics of the eternal present* in which nothing figures except the immediate and continued justification of the discourse (and attendant policies) currently operating and the immediate and continued production of deferred accountability.¹⁰ The White House continually informs the American public that any perceived problem has always already been addressed previously and put to rest in the past; alternatively, we are told that there will be a final, definitive revelation of the truth and rightness of their policies—*just not yet*. When all the facts are known, the truth will come out; however—and here's the postmodern rub to which the Bush administration

closely cleaves—all *the facts* can never be fully known.¹¹ Like the partisans of the Lancastrian usurpation, the White House manifests “a version of Žižek’s ‘cynical belief,’ in which the political actor ‘knows better’ but still behaves as if he or she believed; behaves, that is, no differently from a believer, and hence effectively does believe.”¹²

Performing the Presidency

One key to the Lancastrian strategy of legitimation, according to Stroh, and paramount to framing the parameters of debate, is the “performance of kingship” and attendant host of novel discursive and cultural practices designed to substantiate the claim to power, as in Henry’s choreographed kingly performance before the assembled parliament in September 1399 when he commandeered the throne; the elaborate 1401 trial, condemnation, and public burning of the Lollard Sautre; and the Lancastrian response to Oldcastle’s 1414 “rebellion.” The corresponding requirement for a contemporary American president is “to look presidential.” Like the English king, the American president has a ceremonial, symbolic function, particularly in times of crisis, and the Bush White House understands well the importance of careful stagecraft to create powerful visual impressions and positive sound bites to be endlessly replayed in multiple media outlets.¹³ Dan Bartlett, White House communications director, states that it is as important to craft not only what the president says but also to stage what people see, for “Americans are leading busy lives, and sometimes they don’t have the opportunity to read a story or listen to an entire broadcast. But if they can have an instant understanding of what the president is talking about by seeing sixty seconds of television, you accomplish your goals as communicators. So we take it seriously.”¹⁴

To look presidential, Bush must be in the public eye as often as possible, in concert with the twenty-four-hour, seven-days-per-week news cycle, but only under controlled circumstances. On both state occasions and informal celebrations, Bush is placed at the center of the visual field, and the images are carefully composed for specific ideological effects. In Stephen Orgel’s account of the visual and spatial politics of Renaissance theater, only one seat held the ideal perspective from which the action could be viewed perfectly. In performances at court, this was the monarch’s seat, “and the audience around him at once became a living emblem of the structure of the court. The closer one sat to the monarch, the ‘better’ one’s place was, an index of one’s status, and more directly, the degree of favor one enjoyed.”¹⁵ In other words, the theatrical illusion was complete only from the ruler’s gaze. In a provocatively creative revision of that strategy, the Bush White House creates mass spectacles in which the president is the focus of everyone’s gaze (figure 7.1). Bush stands centrally placed and elevated, haloed and adored. Drawing upon a “theater in the round” concept as expanded by stadium rock-and-roll acts such as U2 and the Rolling Stones, the president now often gives major addresses “in the round,” surrounded on all sides by a seemingly enthralled audience. Although images like this convey a number of messages, the simplest one is probably the most profound: Bush is both a man of the people and one in a million; he is both common and uncommon; he is the center of attention and just like

Figure 7.1 Bush accepting the nomination at the 2004 Republican National Convention; photo courtesy of Patrick Ruffini.

us.¹⁶ The carefully choreographed events of the 2004 Republican National Convention, in which every speech, image, and moment of applause is calibrated to specific effect, contrast dramatically with the huge, widespread, and loosely coordinated protests against the Bush White House outside the convention hall (figures 7.2a and 7.2b).¹⁷ The fragmented, yet linear and sequential procession of different groups of marchers, reflecting the general lack of a centralized organization in the antiwar and anti-Bush forces, simply cannot compete in the national media with the visually managed political productions of the Bush White House.¹⁸

The Bush White House takes the performance of the presidency so seriously that at every opportunity the president is placed into dramatically lighted, carefully composed visual fields that communicate his presidential standing and reinforce the contents of his address. In one example, the White House lit the 305-foot tall Statue of Liberty, a powerful symbol of American freedom, with three barges of lights normally used for rock concerts, during the president's prime-time address commemorating the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.¹⁹ The president's head was perfectly framed by the illuminated Statue of Liberty, on the viewer's left, and a correspondingly monumental and brightly lit American flag, on the opposite end of the island to the viewer's right.²⁰ To compound the implicit message that the president embodies the traditional American values of freedom and patriotism in the face of the terrorist threat, Bush wore an American

Figure 7.2a Protests outside the RNC, August 2004; photo courtesy of Michael Minn.

Figure 7.2b Protests outside the RNC, August 2004; photo courtesy of Michael Minn.

flag pin on his left jacket lapel, which appeared just below the illuminated flag on Liberty Island, and the color of his tie was perfectly matched to the hazy powder blue of the Statue of Liberty rising majestically behind him. More recently, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Bush was pictured before the dramatically lit church in Jackson Square. With the sleeves of his blue shirt rolled up and the statue of Joan of Arc visible over his left shoulder, Bush projected a no-nonsense image of strength and promise to the devastated city.²¹ Whereas the White House was able easily to supply generators to power the dramatic photo opportunity and to provide supplies to feed and hydrate the president and his entourage, New Orleans itself was still without power and residents were dying in their homes.

In other moments of presidential stagecraft, Bush staffers asked those in the crowd behind the president during an Indianapolis speech to remove their ties, "so they would look more like the ordinary folk the president said would benefit from his tax cut"; for a speech touting his economic initiatives, a placard, at the wrong angle for the crowd to read, but just right for the TV audience to make out, declared "Helping Small Business."²² For a speech at Mount Rushmore, the presidential communications personnel placed the platform for TV crews not in front of the president, as is normally the case, but to his right so that any image of Bush fell in profile to the four famous presidents carved in stone.²³ His head in tableau to those in stone, Bush's face is situated directly below Thomas Jefferson's visage, and Bush, looking in nearly the same direction as Teddy Roosevelt, gestures toward Abraham Lincoln while George Washington hovers impassively over Bush's shoulder.

Although it is important to note the unconscious impact of such carefully crafted images in the production of presidential prestige, it is equally important that such images remain somewhat below the radar. Like the empty throne in British Library MS Harley 1319, folio 57, depicting the moment after Richard II's deposition and just before Henry IV's attainment of the throne, an empty image allows multiple, even naïve, readings, but for the Lancastrians such an empty image also invokes an "empty sacral center, a center which the wide range of legitimizing ceremonies and testimonies invoked by Henry of Lancaster in compensatory relation to the deposition and eventual murder of Richard II could not fill."²⁴ Therefore, too much specificity or particularity in a presidential image can create a negative impact. The most dramatic moment of presidential stagecraft to date during the Bush White House was the president's carefully choreographed "royal entry" and address, on 2 May 2003, upon the US Navy aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, to announce the end of major combat operations in Iraq. Scott Sforza, a former ABC producer who now works in the office of White House communications, spent several days on the carrier, preparing for the president's dramatic entry and speech.²⁵ The now famous image of Bush, a former Texas Air National Guard pilot, in full flight gear, emerging from a war plane represents the president as a "Top Gun" pilot,²⁶ and his speech was timed to be delivered in the late afternoon light, known to photographers as "the magic hour." Most importantly, and now problematically, the president was depicted during his address against the USS Abraham Lincoln's conning tower, draped with a banner declaring "Mission Accomplished." One of the keys to the Bush administration's success, especially in the face of its questionable accession to

the presidency in 2000, is its construction and manipulation of political images. An ideologically concomitant strategy is the White House's fundamental denial of history in favor of a politics of immediacy. Unlike the poster placed behind Bush during a speech on economic policy that read "Helping Small Business," in which the gerundival construction indicates continuous action in the present, the famous banner declaring "Mission Accomplished" designates a completed action in the past—a rare kind of double recognition of the supposedly actual past and the *pastness* of the past by the Bush White House. That overt signification of a putatively completed historical moment ("Mission Accomplished") militates against the continual immediacy that the Bush White House seeks—and needs—to create around the president, for such a continual present eliminates the need for causal analysis and political accountability.²⁷ Thus, critics of the administration have used the "Mission Accomplished" declaration as an indictment against the Bush Iraq War policy, and Bush in his flight suit evokes another presidential lacunae, the missing dates in his shaky tenure in the Texas Air National Guard.²⁸ In contrast to the ubiquitous image of the president standing before the conning tower of the USS Abraham Lincoln, with the star-spangled banner announcing "Mission Accomplished" and declaring the "end of major combat operations in Iraq,"²⁹ the only photo depicting Bush's address on the USS Abraham Lincoln available at the White House website now places the aircraft carrier's conning tower and the "Mission Accomplished" banner so far into the background as to be unreadable, even unrecognizable.³⁰

Since more Americans encounter the president through images than through his language, these carefully structured, masterfully crafted images of Bush carry more discursive weight than his formal public pronouncements. As Susan Sontag argues in *On Photography*, the photograph separates reality from history and makes the historical past eternally present:

A new sense of the notion of information has been constructed around the photographic image. The photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time. In a world ruled by photographic images, all borders ("framing") seem arbitrary. Anything can be separated, can be made discontinuous, from anything else: all that is necessary is to frame the subject differently. (Conversely, anything can be made adjacent to anything else.) Photography reinforces a nominalist view of social reality as consisting of small units of an apparently infinite number—as the number of photographs that could be taken of anything is unlimited. Through photographs, the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles; and history, past and present, a set of anecdotes and *faits divers*. The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, continuity, but which confers on each moment the character of a mystery. . . . Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are an inexhaustible invitation to deduction, speculation, and fantasy.³¹

That fantasy projected by viewers into the photographic frame is neither random nor capricious but is instead shaped by the interrelation of a number of elements, most simply the foreground and the background, and the Bush White House, as in the examples detailed above, is expert at the manipulation of the visual image for ideological and political purposes. Sontag goes on to say that "[p]hotography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it.

But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from not accepting the world as it looks. All possibility of understanding is rooted in the ability to say no.”³² Because modern politics is dominated by the twenty-four-hour news day in which images can flit across the globe at the speed of light, and contemporary political coverage is conveyed primarily through images and sound bites that glide easily and randomly across the eyes and ears, controlling the contextless, timeless image is the primary arena of ideological struggle in contemporary American politics. Take, for example, the visual field of CNN’s *Headline News*: A single brief news story, lasting perhaps thirty seconds, as voiced by a devastatingly beautiful and sophisticated newsreader filling the majority of the screen, competes with an ostentatious typed headline in the upper right of the frame, sports scores or stock prices in the midscreen, and up-to-the-minute information on a variety of different subjects in the “crawl” across the bottom border. In such hugely complex visual environments, a single, dominant image carries the greatest impact, and the Bush White House understands how to successfully convey an image in this oversaturated, overdetermined visual environment. As news stories are breathlessly reported, rehashed, commented upon, and left behind, there is little room any more for correction under the pressure of incessant analysis. Thus, particular public misperceptions might serve the administration’s needs perfectly, while right-wing pundits incessantly echo White House talking points. At the same time, the Bush White House has demonstrated the need to control public access to government information through the escalated use of classified documents and an unprecedented level of government secrecy.³³ As the amount of data increases geometrically (the raw bits, the 1s and 0s, of Internet packet transfers, the ceaseless ruminations of political pundits on TV, twenty-four-hour conservative talk radio, and the technorati in blogosphere), the quantity and quality of “information” (data associated meaningfully with specific historical, cultural, or social contexts and practices) decreases correspondingly. This information fog creates the paradox that, as more and more data is communicated, less and less information is understood, and the sheer volume and velocity of data makes political accountability practically impossible.

Bush, himself a former history major at Yale, often demonstrates that history itself, considered as the thoughtful reflection upon the past for the purpose of knowledge in the present, does not always factor into his presidential calculus. When asked by an audience member during the Third Presidential Debate of 2004 to reflect on his presidential decision-making and to evaluate the possibility that he may have made some mistakes, Bush replied,

I have made a lot of decisions, and some of them little, like appointments to boards you never heard of, and some of them big. And in a war, there’s a lot of—there’s a lot of tactical decisions that historians will look back and say: “He shouldn’t have done that. He shouldn’t have made that decision.” And I’ll take responsibility for them. I’m human. But on the big questions, about whether or not we should have gone into Afghanistan, the big question about whether we should have removed somebody in Iraq, I’ll stand by those decisions, because I think they’re right.³⁴

To his admirers, such a stand demonstrates that Bush has the courage of conviction, even in difficult political circumstances; to his detractors, such a response

demonstrates that the president does not trouble himself with the burden of reflecting on his choices and the far-reaching consequences of his convictions. For the purposes of my argument, I would say that the president's response, at the very least, defers the ethical assessment of his choices to some other time (a future perhaps to come) and to someone else (historians), and although he says "he will take responsibility" and "stand by those decisions" in the present for a negative assessment of his actions in some possible future, he will also no longer (at that present moment in the future) be in a position to do anything about his choices. The dead are still dead. Bush functions best in an eternal present in which reflection on the past is unnecessary in the face of steadfast conviction about choices made in the present. History—whether in the past or the future—will be left to fend for itself, and others will have to sift the rubble of Bush's convictions and the material effects of his politics.

Reshaping Personal History

According to Strohm, another feature of the Lancastrian symbolic strategy was to reconfigure the claim to the throne through the tactical revision of historical accounts and political genealogies. One of the most prolific medieval writers, John Lydgate, the monk of Bury and Chaucer's literary successor, fostered Lancastrian sympathies in his poetry by favorably linking "dynastic succession, legitimacy, and nationalism" in his poetry.³⁵ One of the most prolific writers of the fifteenth century, Lydgate combined ecclesiastical authority and political prestige in his often sympathetic accounts of Lancastrian achievements, and like the circuits of power and profit that oscillate between the Bush administration and the Religious Right, so too Lydgate depended upon Lancastrian patronage for his upkeep and that of his monastic foundation at Bury, which had a long history with the crown.³⁶ Lydgate's massive five-part *Troy Book* (1420), commissioned by Henry V in 1412 and the Chaucerian homage *The Siege of Thebes* (ca. 1420–23), incorporating the language of the 1420 *Treaty of Troyes*; and *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI* (1426), a translation from French detailing the descent of the Lancastrian line and its claim to France, are part and parcel of the discursive political rehabilitation of the Henry IV and his successors. Henry IV spoke English at court and promulgated its use in government, and his sponsorship of Lydgate's vernacular writings suggest a deliberate policy to elevate English to the level previously occupied by French.³⁷ Through their literary productions, selective reporting of historical events, sophisticated manipulation of common gossip, and skillful handling of narrative for politically partisan ends, various apologists positioned the Lancastrians as the legitimate inheritors of the English throne and demonstrated that Richard II, the deposed king, not only should have been replaced, but never should have been king in the first place.³⁸

Whereas Henry IV's problem was to establish his legitimate genealogical and historical claim to the throne,³⁹ the Bush White House faces the opposite problem—how to distance the president from his father—but follows a similar outline in positing a new origin and alternative biography for the current president. By quietly eliding the truth of Bush's origin, his upper-class upbringing, and his privileged political position in favor of an image of a self-made man, the

president is shown to be a working-class “regular guy.” Born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1946, to one of the most powerful and politically connected families in America, Bush’s official biography states that he grew up in Midland and Houston, Texas;⁴⁰ however, in a deliberate attempt to distance G.W. Bush’s image from his father’s, it neglects to mention that the younger Bush also attended three of the most exclusive and expensive schools in the nation, all associated with East Coast wealth and privilege: Philips Andover Academy, Yale University, and Harvard Business School. In contrast, when the president is depicted outside the context of his official White House duties, he is usually portrayed working, relaxing, and entertaining at his Crawford, Texas, ranch.⁴¹ These Crawford images eclipse the facts of the president’s privileged upbringing and bolster his man-of-the-people image. In effect, they overwrite part of his history and instantiate an alternative genealogy for the son of a president and the grandson of a senator from Connecticut. But these homespun images are also doubly coded: in visits to his personal home for Texas-style barbeque, Bush has “pressured the leaders of China and Japan to help stop North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, discussed plans for Middle East peace with the heads of Egypt, Israel and Britain and has plotted Saddam Hussein’s removal with his war allies,” and he deliberately snubbed French President Jacques Chirac for opposing the invasion of Iraq by *not* inviting him to the ranch.⁴² The president also invites his domestic advisors to the Crawford ranch, formally titled the Prairie Chapel Ranch, for sleeves-rolled-up working sessions.⁴³

The president can claim two separate histories, each divorced from the other yet intimately intertwined. On one hand, Bush’s current incarnation repudiates an older one, as the dissolute youth gives way to the worldly-wise statesman.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Bush’s religious history supersedes his secular office, for he presents evidence of having been “born again.” There are two different documented accounts of the president’s spiritual awakening, according to Alex Johnson.⁴⁵ In the first account, Bush says that a conversation with Billy Graham in 1985 “planted a mustard seed in my soul, a seed that grew over the next year” (referencing Matthew 13:31–32). In the second account, in 1984 the president met with evangelist Arthur Blessitt, who prayed with Bush as he accepted Jesus as his savior.⁴⁶ The political logic of the president’s spiritual awakening—and recast history—is the logic of evangelical rebirth: the former man, with his vices and drawbacks, was swept away through the power of God; a new, reborn person takes his place, and this change prepares him for a new role, which God has designed. Although the president’s family history is Episcopalian—a denomination somewhat suspect to evangelicals and the politicized Religious Right—the president has walked a fine line in which he has never claimed the mantle of having been born again, yet he has never denied it either. The closest Bush has come to proclaiming his new birth publicly was in the 1999 Des Moines Republican candidates’ debate. When asked who his favorite philosopher was, “He shocked almost everyone present by responding, unhesitatingly, ‘Christ. Because he changed my heart.’ Following up, Bush explained that ‘when you accept Christ as savior, it changes your heart. It changes your life. And that’s what happened to me.’”⁴⁷ This statement has been curiously absent in recent discussions of whether or not Bush’s personal faith impacts his political decision-making. Whereas Henry IV had to go to great lengths to justify his hereditary

claim to the English throne, and thus perpetuate alternative genealogies that brought him into the line of succession, the younger Bush has had the opposite problem. In a classic Oedipal move, at the same time he has traded upon the currency of his family name and the connections afforded by his privileged upbringing, Bush simultaneously has had to distance himself from his father's legacy to justify his own claim to the presidency, to vindicate his own political legitimacy, and to separate his radical brand of so-called compassionate conservatism from the elder Bush's comparatively more middle-of-the-road views.

Accordingly, although the privileged circumstances of Bush's birth and education are consistently elided in his official political biography, the White House has seen the tactical advantages of tacitly acknowledging some of the unsavory elements of Bush's history, only and always to consign them firmly to the past, and not to contradict reports of the president's religious rebirth. Known as somewhat profligate when a younger man, Bush has admitted to drinking to excess and, though accused of using cocaine, not an uncommon practice for the Baby Boom generation, he has remained studiously vague about the particulars of his previous drug usage.⁴⁸ Even in terms of Bush's religious heritage, what matters is the here and now. Bush's possibly dissolute past is firmly placed into an alternate history, even if we don't know exactly what that past entailed; at the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge that past so that a spiritually wrought change in his mien is clear to the faithful, as in the parapolitical production *George W. Bush: Faith in the White House*, a film designed to counter Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 911* and cater to the evangelical vote.⁴⁹ The White House's simultaneous acceptance and disavowal of Bush's past function in much the same way that alternative genealogies and poetic productions operated to legitimate Lancastrian rule. Furthermore, the linking of George W. Bush's name with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in *George W. Bush: Faith in the White House* places Bush in an American pantheon and a historical succession, yet such an association glibly (and wrongly) assumes that each of the three men embraced the same theology and practiced the same kind of Christianity—despite being separated by hundreds of years of history. Tellingly, and of a piece with the White House politics of continuous immediacy, the president and the first lady are themselves never interviewed for *George W. Bush: Faith in the White House*. Instead, powerful leaders of the Christian Right—such as James Robison, TV personality and evangelist; Ted Haggard, fallen president of the National Association of Evangelicals;⁵⁰ and Don Hodel, president and CEO of James Dobson's Focus on the Family—speak for and about the president.⁵¹ The White House thus fosters Bush's identification with the norms and values of the Religious Right, without too narrowly identifying him with a particular brand of evangelical Christianity.⁵²

Eliding Political History

Not only have White House political strategists revised and attenuated George W. Bush's personal history for political purposes, but they have also silently amended the history of foreign policy decisions for partisan advantage. To choose just one example out of many, in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, Saddam Hussein's use of chemical agents against the pro-Iranian Kurds in 1988 was used as a demonstration that he might also use nuclear and biological weapons against enemies

such as the United States. President Bush reiterated this in his 2003 State of the Union address: "Some have said we must not act until the threat is imminent. Since when have terrorists and tyrants announced their intentions, politely putting us on notice before they strike? If this threat is permitted to fully and suddenly emerge, all actions, all words, and all recriminations would come too late. Trusting in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein is not a strategy, and it is not an option. (Applause.) The dictator who is assembling the world's most dangerous weapons has already used them on whole villages—leaving thousands of his own citizens dead, blind, or disfigured."⁵³ In the crucial address to the United Nations Security Council on 5 February 2003, in which he made the administration's case for going to war against Iraq, Colin Powell called the assembled leaders' attention to the fact that "Saddam Hussein has used these horrific weapons on another country and on his own people. In fact, in the history of chemical warfare, no country has had more battlefield experience with chemical weapons since World War I than Saddam Hussein's Iraq."⁵⁴ What neither Powell's address nor the president's speech revealed is that Iraq received economic and military aid from the elder Bush's administration, particularly dual-use technologies (civilian technologies with military applications like heavy trucks and construction vehicles, sensitive communication equipment, and powerful state-of-the-art computers) when Hussein was America's ally against Iran during the Iran–Iraq war of 1980–88.⁵⁵

At worst, then, the United States was complicit in providing the technical expertise and raw materials for the chemical weapons attack that devastated the village of Halabja in March 1988, and at best, the United States effectively turned a blind eye when the atrocity was revealed.⁵⁶ The Bush administration used the Halabja attack as evidence of the Iraqi program to develop Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and Saddam Hussein's willingness to use them militarily.⁵⁷ If it is true that Saddam Hussein gassed the Kurds in his own country, it is equally true that, at some level, the United States facilitated Hussein's ability to do so.⁵⁸ One image that did not see wide distribution during the preparation for the invasion of Iraq was Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's visit with Saddam Hussein when Rumsfeld worked for the Reagan administration (see n58). The truth is that the United States has had a long, politically expedient history with Saddam Hussein, and the incessant and continuing revision of the administration's rationale for the invasion of Iraq is a miraculous demonstration of the Derridean ideas of *différance* and supplementarity. According to Derrida, *différance* characterizes language. A pun in French, *différance* indicates the tendency of words, or language itself, both *to differ* from other words and *to defer* to other words, or elements of language, for meaning. Thus, words, substitutions or signs for things not immediately present, must supplement the *différance*—this movement of deferral and difference—that characterizes language. Thus, the meaning of language, which is in some way supposed to represent reality, is never fixed or stable but requires additional supplementation—more and more words, texts, and other cultural products to fill that gap of *différance*.

I will not attempt here to trace in detail the Bush White House's shifting justifications for invading Iraq, for others have already done so, but I do want to outline the process of *différance* structuring that rationale.⁵⁹ Each time the Bush administration makes an argument for the invasion and the premise of that

argument turns out to be false, the White House marshals a new argument that elides the error while at the same time encompasses and extends the previous argument. The logical trajectory goes something like this: (1) Saddam Hussein is an immediate physical threat to the United States and its allies because he has WMDs; (2) If no WMDs have been found in Iraq, then it is because the intelligence was faulty, but Hussein must still be removed because of his ties to al-Qaeda, international terrorism, and the 9/11 attacks; (3) If Iraq's centrality to international terrorism or the 9/11 attacks cannot be substantiated, then the invasion is still justified because of the brutality of Hussein's dictatorship against his own citizens; (4) If the horror of Saddam's regime is not enough to warrant the invasion and occupation of Iraq, then the invasion is still justified because it will bring democracy and self-determination to the Iraqi people; (5) If bringing democracy and freedom to the Iraqi people is not justification enough to have overthrown Saddam Hussein, then the invasion is still warranted because it unleashes the forces of democracy and free-market capitalism through the still-monarchical Middle East; and (6) If bringing democracy and freedom to the Middle East is not ample warrant to have overthrown Saddam Hussein, then anyone who opposes the invasion and occupation of Iraq clearly opposes American ideals and is, by implication if not by direct accusation, un-American—because one cannot be an American and not oppose a brutal dictatorship like Saddam Hussein's, the idea of global democracy, or world-wide free markets.⁶⁰

Thus, the Bush administration's ongoing arguments for the invasion and occupation of Iraq have appealed less and less to concrete threats and more and more to abstract principles, and these arguments also increasingly move from demonstrable fact toward reified concepts—from preventing Saddam Hussein's attempts to inflict death and physical destruction upon the United States and its allies to upholding the abstract conceptions of freedom, democracy, and human dignity.⁶¹ These are ideals that, in the abstracted, Manichean worldview of neoconservative ideology, can simultaneously justify, at one current estimate, between 55,000 and 655,000 Iraqi civilian deaths, with the U.S. Department of Defense confirming nearly 3,000 coalition troop deaths and 45,000 casualties.⁶² The rationale of invasion is thus finally rooted in a supposedly timeless truth or ideological position like *freedom* that crosses all historical boundaries while erasing the history of its own supplementation. Derrida calls such a universal concept a "transcendental signified," and all logocentric systems finally appeal to a seemingly timeless universal concept, in order to root, ground, or otherwise stabilize the slippery play of language and contingencies of history.⁶³ The U.S. advocacy of "freedom" can therefore justify ongoing bloodshed in Iraq—a burden that we are assured is only temporary and will be lifted sometime in the future. In contrast, however, the war on terror has no apparent ending. Bush calls this strategy "defending the peace, protecting the peace and extending the peace."⁶⁴ Yet there is no point at which anyone can be sure that terrorism has been definitively defeated because the enemy is undefined, the "front" is unclear, the terms of victory indeterminate. As a result, the White House and its allies argue that the accumulation of monarchical powers in the president's hands should likewise be without foreseeable end, or in the terms of my argument, permanently immediate and without reference to history.⁶⁵

The Postmodern Presidency

I would contend, then, that one of the most conservative presidential administrations of modern times is, paradoxically, the most thoroughly and radically postmodern in its deconstructive political strategies and relativistic ethical stances, for the conventional, positivist view of history as a past that can be accessed and understood apart from its discursive expression is valued only as the staging ground for a continual reinterpretation of the present in relation to various justifications for constantly shifting policies. Even if the Bush White House is caught in a seemingly contradictory or ethically dubious position, the torrent of electronically mediated information can work against political accountability. Because so much information is available from so many (and ever so contradictory) sources, there will never be a time when all the facts of any specific case will come out: there are too many facts to accumulate, too many perspectives to incorporate, too many variables to consider, too many sources to consult. An administration that depends on universally applicable but parochially defined concepts like “freedom” operates inversely proportional to its idea of a positivist, recoverable history, and any statement summoned in putative critique of the administration’s actions can be opposed by dozens of others that offer differing interpretations, competing rationales, alternative accounts, and rival justifications.

For example, the Preface to the Project for a New American Century’s (PNAC) “Iraq: Setting the Record Straight” states: “We suspect some of the report’s material will come as a surprise to a number of readers. This is because much of the reporting on the documents and statements of UN inspection teams and U.S. government officials on Saddam’s weapons programs, and his compliance with UN resolutions, has left wide gaps in the public’s understanding of what the president faced on March 18, 2003, and what we have learned since. There have also been administration critics who have selectively used material in the historical record to reinforce their case against the president’s policy. With this in mind, our report attempts to give readers a fuller account of what we knew before the war, and what we know now.” Further, in an appendix to this document, entitled “The Right War for the Right Reasons,” authors Robert Kagan and William Kristol argue: “Critics of the war, and of the Bush administration, have seized on the failure to find stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But while his weapons were a key part of the case for removing Saddam, that case was always broader. Saddam’s pursuit of weapons of mass destruction was inextricably intertwined with the nature of his tyrannical rule, his serial aggression, his defiance of international obligations, and his undeniable ties to a variety of terrorists, from Abu Nidal to al Qaeda.”⁶⁶ Thus, the rationale for war given in that past present, wherein preemption was justified on the basis of Saddam Hussein’s “immanent and immediate threat” to the United States and its allies, could never be known at that moment—and in fact could be found to be nonexistent—but could only become clear sometime in the future, the moment of PNAC’s report, April 2005.

Yet this moment of historical reinscription, which then retrospectively rewrites the history of the conflict, justifies the administration’s action in the present and forecloses any argument about what should be done in the future—apart from pursuing the White House’s continuing and continually shifting policy aims. So,

while reduction of reality to information, to discourse, or to textuality alone is a hallmark of postmodern culture, castigated by conservatives as “moral relativism” or worse,⁶⁷ this most conservative presidential administration itself operates according to the same postmodernist discursive principles.⁶⁸ If one continues to argue about representations, or how each side of a policy debate has biased their argument, then substantive issues are rarely enjoined, and keeping policy arguments at the level of a constantly supplemented and differing textuality serves the Bush White House well. Chuck Colson, former Nixon advisor and now a born-again activist, castigates postmodernism in terms that in fact describe the Bush administration’s *modus operandi*:

To put it in the most shorthand way, relativism and deconstruction and existentialism have to lead to the loss of any transcendent authority. Whenever a society lacks transcendent authority, it is going to be governed by whoever can obtain power—and there will be no restraints upon that person or party. The process is almost inevitable. Even democracies—and remember Franklin said democracy is a good thing if you can keep it—must have some overarching objective standards to support a rule of law; without that it will fall into chaos just like any other governing structure. If postmodernism succeeds in destroying transcendent authority, the inevitable consequences are anarchy and nihilism. But nihilism is a vacuum and all vacuums must be filled; so without the restraint of a higher law a tyrant can always be depended upon to step in to fill the power vacuum; and people always choose order over liberty.⁶⁹

It would be easy to appreciate the irony of Colson’s statement applying to the White House’s neoconservative policies if such irony were only limited to issues of textuality and did not entail the recognition of the profound human misery that has been occasioned by Bush administration policies.

Lancastrian apologists such as Adam of Usk, whose Latin chronicle of English history from 1377 to 1404 included political prophecies in favor of Henry IV, melded fact, fiction, and “spin” of well-known events and gossipy folklore to denigrate Richard II.⁷⁰ Likewise, the Bush White House has mobilized at least four other questionable tactics in its effort to legitimize Bush’s reign, blur the distinction between news and propaganda, and recursively neutralize any counter-discourse. These methods parallel the Lancastrian efforts to control the content and flow of political discourse, to manipulate imaginative spaces of political culture, and to subsume political fallout, all in the effort to stifle opposition. First, the White House has used phony news reporters and given them unequal access to the president to generate favorable news coverage. The Bush administration gave Jeff Gannon, the supposed Washington Bureau chief and White House correspondent of so-called Talon News, access to the White House Press Corps and to Scott McClellan’s daily presidential news briefings, conferring instant credibility upon the little-known reporter and his news organization. As a result, Gannon’s conservative credentials rose when during a nationally televised news conference, he asked the president a “loaded, partisan question—featuring a manufactured quote that mocked Democrats for being ‘divorced from reality.’”⁷¹ The problem, unacknowledged by the White House, was that Jeff Gannon and Talon News were both fictions. The “reporter’s” real name is apparently James

Dale Guckert, and “Talon News” is a venture of the GOPUSA, a conservative media website with close ties to Texas conservatives.⁷² While a number of legitimate news outlets have not able to penetrate the White House’s press thicket, Guckert’s “reporting” consisted in rewriting Republican press releases as “news,” and “Talon News” was staffed by GOPUSA volunteers. The White House thereby facilitated the planting of a sympathetic ideological agent into the reporting process in a contrived effort to manipulate the news to partisan ends.

Second, in addition to perpetuating partisan opinion as news, the Bush administration has contracted with seemingly “neutral” political commentators and paid exorbitant fees for these pundits to advocate for White House policy—with neither the government nor the pundits revealing that they were on the government payroll. The Department of Education paid Armstrong Williams, former aide to Strom Thurmond and friend of Clarence Thomas, \$241,000 to argue the administration’s case for the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Department of Health and Human Services paid \$21,000 to Universal Press Syndicate columnist Maggie Gallagher to “emphasize the importance of marriage to poor couples [and] educate teens on the value of delaying childbearing until marriage” in Bush’s conservative marriage initiative.⁷³ When confronted with her lapse in journalistic ethics, Gallagher said, in effect, “I forgot” (“I should have disclosed a government contract when I later wrote about the Bush marriage initiative. I would have, if I had remembered it. My apologies to my readers”).⁷⁴ The White House paid popular pundits to disseminate a pro-administration party line without notifying the public that these people were on the public payroll. In each case, allies and appointees of the Bush White House rewrite their personal histories to suit the political needs of the moment, recreating their former allegiances according to the politics of immediacy.

A third method of dominating the flow of political discourse while subverting the distinction between news and propaganda or, more broadly, illusion and reality, can be seen in the way that executive agencies of the Bush White House have issued video press releases with a partisan message prepackaged for broadcast on the nation’s airwaves as if they were impartial news stories. In one case, a TV news report before the 2004 election showing Bush getting a standing ovation for signing into law the Medicare prescription drug bill was revealed to be a fake. The supposed reporter, “Karen Ryan,” “was an actor hired to read a script prepared by the government, according to production company Home Front Communications.”⁷⁵ In another, “Mike Morris,” an actor reading a script written by the Office of Drug Control Policy, lauded the White House’s efforts to combat drug usage, but what “viewers did not know was that Morris is not a journalist and his ‘report’ was produced by the government, actions that constituted illegal ‘covert propaganda,’ according to an investigation by the Government Accountability Office.”⁷⁶ Most recently, what appeared to be an impromptu discussion between Bush and members of the 42nd Infantry Division (Mechanized) National Guard Unit in Tikrit turns out to have been carefully rehearsed, moving National Public Radio’s David Greene to comment laconically, “While it’s common to use a trial run to ensure things go smoothly when the president arrives, the event, recorded by NPR, offered some insights into the meticulous nature of advance work.”⁷⁷ The White House has used paid actors, soldiers, and others to laud administration policies and further blur the line between legitimate information and partisan propaganda.

Finally, a fourth strategy for manipulating public opinion is to turn public relations into a strategic and tactical weapon, subverting the distinction between foreign propaganda and domestic media. James Bamford reports that between 2000 and 2004 the Pentagon contracted the Rendon Group, “a global strategic communications consultancy,”⁷⁸ for at least thirty-five jobs, worth between fifty and one hundred million dollars.⁷⁹ By extending psychological operations or “psy-ops” into the realm of “information warfare and perception management,”⁸⁰ the administration takes advantage of the “borderless” world created by the Internet and has used a third-party firm to plant fictitious news stories overseas, completely aware that these fake news reports will be picked up by domestic news sources and recirculated in America. “As a result, information itself is now both a tool and target of warfare.”⁸¹ While the Rendon Group, the firm Bamford identifies as being responsible for such manipulations, adamantly denied any such activities,⁸² the *Information Operations Roadmap* (dated 30 October 2003 and signed by Secretary of Defense Ronald Rumsfeld), recently obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and made public by National Security Archive at George Washington University, substantiates Bamford’s allegations.⁸³

The Bush administration’s proclivity for controlling the flow of information for partisan purposes requires, according to the *Information Operations Roadmap*, “dominating the information spectrum” and “transforming IO into a core military competency on a par with air, ground, maritime, and special operations.”⁸⁴ Certainly, the use of propaganda by governments is neither new nor surprising, but what is innovative is the Bush White House’s systematic, pervasive, and unapologetic use of these techniques not only against the “enemy” but also in the domestic context to methodically influence public opinion, undermine concerted analysis, and deny counterfactual data. By making the dissemination of information a war tactic, the Bush administration also manipulates support for the war, and by blurring the demarcation between foreign propaganda and domestic media, they make the American public just another “front” in their permanent “war on terror.” Thus, unlike the Vietnam War, where the number of casualties, the destruction of South Vietnamese villages and civilians, and photos of dead American soldiers were reported daily in the national news and broadcast over network TV, the Bush administration denies even photos of American caskets returning home from the war. Calling the conflict a “war of ideas” or “clash of cultures,” the administration conceals the human cost of war—the horrible price in mangled bodies, ruined families, and devastated homes, towns, and countries. Quietly subverting U.S. law governing domestic propaganda, the White House has taken to heart one of postmodernism’s central *dicta*: “Knowledge is Power.”

Enemies External: A Medieval Worldview

Perhaps the most interesting example of the Lancastrian approach to the problem of history was their use of political prophecy, in which the “pastness” of the prediction served to justify the present monarchical circumstances as a *fait accompli*, immutable, unwavering, inevitable, and—most importantly—divinely ordained. More specifically, the upstart Lancastrians and their sympathizers mobilized the “vindictory or triumphalist use of prophecy, in which

past prophecy is stripped of its capacity to cause or make things happen and is recruited to bear fitful witness to a current inevitability as part of their effort to keep and extend their power.”⁸⁵ In one account, the Lancastrian chronicler Creton recorded an “old knight’s” account “that Merlin and Bede had prophesied the taking and destruction of the king [Richard II] during their lifetimes.”⁸⁶ In another, Adam of Usk reworked the Bridlington prophecy, dating to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, to fit Lancastrian needs. In each case, earlier texts like Bede and Bridlington were mobilized and reinterpreted to fit the current political moment, much in the same way the political agenda of the “theocons” overlaps with that of the “neocons” in the political calculus of the Bush White House.⁸⁷ In contrast, Bush’s unscripted and impromptu comments after the 9/11 attacks (16 September 2001) summoned the specter of a new Crusade and defined a “new kind of evil.”⁸⁸ Leaving aside for a moment the fact that Hollywood had been envisioning terrorist scenarios involving the World Trade Center and New York City landmarks for years, I would like to bring out three dimensions informing the conception of history underlying Bush’s statement. First, Bush’s reference to the Crusades reveals again the bifurcated worldview underlying not only neoconservative politics but also the White House’s Christian triumphalism and dismissal of history as anything other than a justification of current policy. The dualistic worldview of fundamentalist Christianity in its dispensationalist form perfectly and paradoxically aligns with the neoconservative vision of a unipolar world of the United States against every other nation. Much in the same way the Lancastrian appropriation of prophecy worked to colonize the imaginative space of English subjects’ political reckoning, so the Bush administration’s strategy of deferred accountability parallels the fundamentalist Christian interpretation of history. In this view, “history” is sandwiched between two advents: the first advent of Christ’s nativity, for the salvation of humanity, and the second advent of Christ’s return, in judgment of those who reject that offer of salvation. Anything prior to the first advent is simply a prequel; everything prior to the second advent is simply buying time. History is overdetermined as a continual present whose value, importance, and meaning will be determined only by a decisive moment that is always deferred—but sure to come. According to this pre-millennialist doctrine, the signs of the end of the world are present everywhere, and thus the Second Coming of Christ is immediately at hand—but not quite yet.

Second, Strohm also elucidates how Lancastrian sympathizers revised, adumbrated, glossed, and otherwise tailored “a pre-existing repository or, actually, junkyard of utterances abounding in curiosities and irrelevancies . . . including the occasional usable obscurity” to herald the downfall of Richard II and the rise of the Lancastrians.⁸⁹ Bush’s reference to the Crusades functions in the same way. It is a historically bankrupt but ideologically fruitful “usable obscurity,” uttered without any regard for its cultural suitability; despite the romantic notion of chivalry painted in historical novels, the Crusades were essentially a failure for the West in that they ultimately did not maintain their objectives and released a number of unintended consequences. In the roughly 200 years of the most intense crusading (from the preaching of the First Crusade in 1095 to the fall of Acre in 1291), the West held Jerusalem for less than 100 years (1099–1191). The

Crusade reference is then strangely inappropriate as well as revealing. It denotes the Christian militarism at the heart of the Bush-neoconservative agenda and summons the call to holy war under the pretext of patriotism—exactly the mirror image or “monstrous double” of the Islamicist call for Jihad.⁹⁰ At the same time, it points to Jerusalem as the object of a religious quest even as the Bush administration refuses to see any linkage between the events of 9/11 and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁹¹

Finally, Bush’s invocation of “a new kind of evil” announces what Giorgio Agamben calls “a state of permanent exception.”⁹² Previously, the political exception was a limited and temporary suspension of the rule of law to meet a particular state of emergency, but Agamben asks the provocative question: What happens to democracies like the United States when the exception *becomes* the rule? The short answer is, the state of permanent exception can justify any kind of behavior, policy, or rationale, but it also blurs the distinctions between politics and the law, for the law (including its suspension) becomes a political tool in the hands of an increasingly sovereign executive branch. In the hands of the Bush administration, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the state of exception have become the justification for an intensive roll-back of civil rights in the form of the PATRIOT Act, which allows unprecedented government incursion into the lives of citizens, for the unlimited incarceration of “detainees” who are neither prisoners of war nor criminals, the elimination of the traditional right of *habeas corpus*, and for a massive escalation in government expenditures and infrastructure for military, surveillance, and “Homeland Security” administration.⁹³ In the midst of this restructuring of the U.S. system of checks and balances according to exigencies of the present moment, democracy must be temporarily suspended in order to save democracy. Bush’s continual adoption of the title of “Commander-in-Chief” produces, according to Agamben, “a situation in which the emergency becomes the rule, and the very distinction between peace and war (and between foreign and civil war) becomes impossible.”⁹⁴

In a state of permanent emergency in which “our way of life” is continually threatened, the focus of the war is shifted from ultimate victory to the ongoing battle in the present. Such an ethic of war parallels what Allen Frantzen has called “heroic masculinity,” for the Crusades defined war “as a form of worship and an act of penitence,” and “the knight who set off on a sacrificial mission to avenge the foe often became, in his own eyes and the eyes of others, a self-sacrificing figure.”⁹⁵ Thus, Bush’s reference to the Crusades was less an index of historical reality than it was the articulation of a sacrificial imperative, designed to reconsecrate total war against a foreign infidel. The Manichean worldview of the Bush administration and its supporters depends upon the creation of an outcast “Other” against which the righteous self may be defined, but whose existence is therefore necessary to that self-definition. In other words, to make America great (again), it must have an unparalleled external enemy to conquer and internal dissent to quell. The representational coordinates of the Bush White House and the Religious Right parallel in so many particulars that one might say that fundamentalist politics and right-wing religion form the Bush double-helix, an intertwined spiral of political theology and theological politics.⁹⁶

Enemies Internal: A Medieval Alliance

James Carroll points out, as medieval scholars have before him, that the Crusades' outward militarism against Islam in the name of God was soon matched by internal crusades, for "sacred violence, once unleashed in 1096, as in 2001, had a momentum of its own. The urgent purpose of war against the 'enemy outside'—what some today call the 'clash of civilizations'—led quickly to the discovery of an 'enemy inside.'"⁹⁷ The crusaders, en route from northwestern Europe to attack the infidel far away, fell upon "the infidel near at hand," first the Jews and then Christian heretics like the Cathars and Albigensians.⁹⁸ In the United States today, that crusade takes the form of profiling and surveilling Muslims and darker-skinned peoples of Arab and North African descent, on one hand, and, on the other hand, defining dissent and alternative perspectives on the Bush administration's policies as "unpatriotic" at best and "seditious" and "treasonous" at worst.⁹⁹

In the same way the radical Right has demonized the "L" word (Liberal), so too the Lancastrians dealt with their own "L" word—the Lollards. During the late fourteenth century, the Lancastrians furthered their political goals by allying themselves with religious orthodoxy and against the university, particularly controversial and heterodox university professors. One of Henry IV's strongest supporters was Thomas Arundel, archbishop of York (1388–97), next archbishop of Canterbury in 1397 (when Richard II exiled him), and then archbishop of Canterbury again from 1399 until his death in 1414. Arundel is known especially for his opposition to Lollardy. Originating in the teachings of Oxford University theologian John Wyclif in the 1350s, the Lollards (from Latin *lolium* or 'weeds') advocated reforming the Church of political and monetary corruption, curbing priestly excess, preaching from (and translating the Bible into) English, and promoting alternative perspectives on doctrinal issues such as transubstantiation, the role of the laity, and confession. The Lollards found a sympathetic ear in John of Gaunt, Edward III's third son, who found in Lollardy a platform from which to oppose the cozy relationship between royal and ecclesiastical power. Lollardy thus quickly became implicated in the struggle of the nobility against the crown, as in the so-called Peasants' Revolt of 1381, one of whose leaders, John Ball, was a Lollard priest. In similar fashion, much of Bush's political success has been tied closely to the resurgence of the conservative social agenda of the Religious Right and its basic anti-intellectualism, particularly its demonization of liberal (arts) university faculty.

The rooting out of heresy in the medieval universities, like Henry IV's pursuit of the Lollards, has found a contemporary ideological correlate in a report issued soon after 9/11, entitled "Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America," written by Jerry L. Martin and Anne D. Neal, and issued under the auspices of the conservative American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), founded by Lynne V. Cheney (wife of Vice President Dick Cheney).¹⁰⁰ Calling academia "the weak link in America's response to the attack," Martin and Neal decry the "shocking divide between academe and the public at large," deprecate those who did not "follow the President in calling evil by its rightful name," and condemn those who "pointed accusatory fingers, not at the terrorists, but at America itself."¹⁰¹ The opening page denouncing academe is then

followed by more than a hundred quotations, many by name, from American academics who questioned, with varying proportions of analysis and vehemence, American complicity in the events leading up to the 9/11 attacks. Martin and Neal's conclusion: "Indeed, the message of much of academe was clear: **BLAME AMERICA FIRST.**"¹⁰² Martin and Neal note that so-called liberal professors seemed rarely to "publicly mention heroism, rarely did they discuss the difference between good and evil, the nature of Western political order or the virtue of a free society."¹⁰³ Martin and Neal's call for a return to the traditional, narrowly defined Western canon has now received Congressional approval, with huge public expenditures set aside for "supporting faculty and academic programs that teach traditional American history," defined by Congress as "(significant constitutional, political, intellectual, economic, diplomatic and foreign policy trends, issues and documents); the history, nature, and development of democratic institutions of which American democracy is a part; and significant events and individuals in the history of the United States."¹⁰⁴

I want to note a couple of distinctions in the notion of history underlying many of the "Blame America First" comments, as opposed to ACTA's criticism of those opinions and their solution to these perceived problems. The ACTA response focuses intensely, or almost exclusively, on what I have called the White House's politics of the eternal present. In this view, the 9/11 attacks were unprecedented and wholly without justification, and terrorism itself has no origin, no history. The attacks arose within the mind of Islamic fundamentalism and Osama bin Laden *ex nihilo* in unbridled hatred of Western freedoms and were unleashed upon an unsuspecting American public. Indeed, while the attacks traumatized the country and killed thousands upon thousands of innocent Americans, the symbolic impact of the attacks—directed at the center of American commerce (the World Trade Center), the seat of the military (the Pentagon), and, though unfulfilled due to the heroic actions of American passengers, the heart of government (the Capitol)—was equally as devastating. These assaults on the symbols of American achievement were, in this view, an attack on the very ideals of American society and indicated the "clash of civilizations" or a basic incompatibility between Western culture and Islamic fundamentalism. Sorting out the underlying motivation for the attacks is of little importance, from this history-blind perspective. The only thing that matters is that the United States was attacked, and the only thing that matters *right now* is that we respond in a way that guarantees our continued survival.

In contrast, the "Blame America First" responses engaged a more complicated, heterogeneous view of history, for many of the academics cited historical precedents of American military aggression, economic exploitation, and cultural imperialism, or leveled the moral playing field by equating the state-sanctioned violence of war with the extra-national and paramilitary violence of terrorism. In other words, though their rationale or perspectives may differ individually, these academics generally responded by saying, in one way or another, "There are understandable reasons why we were attacked, and the behavior of the US government in the past may have motivated this violence in some way."¹⁰⁵ That is, there is a prior history, a complicated scenario, or a discernable chain of events that motivated such a brutal assault, and those reasons are isolable, knowable, and within their own frame of reference, coherent in revealing

why America became a target. While the Bush administration's response is to isolate the attacks as an end in themselves, a typical *critical* academic response would be to try to understand the sociopolitical factors and the entire chain of cause-and-effect events that led up to the bombings and to make them more comprehensible in social and historical terms. This is not necessarily the same as justifying or excusing the 9/11 violence as it is to make it understandable within its own logical constraints. Although we have not yet had the public *auto da fe* of either a Badby or Sawtre, heretics burned at the stake during Henry IV's reign, there have been coordinated campaigns of public harassment and orchestrated attempts to silence dissenting voices of unpopular scholars such as Ward Churchill, Noam Chomsky, and the late Edward Said. These three very different scholars are often lumped together, though their views are manifestly different, as they and many others are in David Horowitz's *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*.¹⁰⁶

Perfecting Symbolic Violence

The Bush administration has perfected a system of "symbolic violence," to use Pierre Bourdieu's term, of elegant simplicity. "Symbolic violence" names those forms of coercion that simultaneously exercise and disguise the operations of power, a "gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such, chosen as much as undergone, that of trust, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, piety, in a word, all of the virtues honoured by the ethic of honour."¹⁰⁷ The trust and loyalty that Americans place, rightly or wrongly, in systems of mass communication and the power of the image have been cynically appropriated by the Bush administration in order to further control the American social and political imagination; like Lancastrian sympathizers 600 years earlier, and by a paradoxical logic, they have turned the question of legitimacy into a struggle over representation. It is the postmodernist move *par excellence*: textuality or representation, not "reality," is the measure of meaning. At the same time, the Bush administration's ability to constantly shift, alter, and incrementally repeat its "message," like its mastery over the President's image, is likewise a form of symbolic violence, for the viewer misrecognizes the image as "natural" and "legitimate," when in fact it is the product of an ideological system whose purpose is political pacification and the creation of consent. Thus, the Bush administration has demonstrated, as the Lancastrians before them, that the key to political success is to control the ground of information and to win the battle of conflicting interpretations, and further, to negate any counter-narratives, demonize the opposition, and silence critics. Nonetheless, it must always be remembered that George W. Bush initially was granted, not elected to, the presidency, for is not the "hanging chad"—a punched-out divot of paper, "an O without a figure," as the Fool terms Lear,¹⁰⁸ attached by the merest thread of fiber—the true image of the Bush White House's claim to legitimacy?

Notes

I would like to thank Patrick Ruffini for permission to use his image of President Bush at the 2004 Republican National Convention (figure 7.1), and Michael Minn for his photographs of protesters at the 2004 Republican National Convention (figures 7.2a and 7.2b).

1. The full details, documents, and timeline of the Election 2000 crisis may be accessed at <http://news.findlaw.com/legalnews/us/election/election2000.html>. The University of Michigan's Documents Center (<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/elec2000.html>) provides an archive of the legal material as well as campaign and issue advertisements, and Stanford University's Robert Crown Law Library provides well-indexed access to all the pertinent documents at <http://election2000.stanford.edu/>.
2. E.F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399–1485* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 13.
3. For a brief but authoritative overview of Richard II's deposition and death, see Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, pp. 1–30.
4. See Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 405–34.
5. Saul, *Richard II*, pp. 405–34.
6. Quoted in Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, pp. 28–29.
7. The following chronology of post-election events is distilled from the *US News and World Report* on-line report, "Election 2000: The Postelection Events Day by Day," <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/election/magtimeline.html>.
8. See the Wikipedia entry, "US Presidential Election, 2000," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_presidential_election%2C_2000, for a detailed analysis of the election controversy, including the tabulation of alternative vote totals based upon different recount scenarios.
9. Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399–1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 2.
10. For an introduction to Paul Virilio's early work, see his *Speed and Politics* (London: Semiotexte, 1986) and *War and Cinema* (New York: Verso, 1989). See also his more recent *Negative Horizon: An Essay in Dromoscopy* (London: Continuum, 2005). Jacques Derrida's most accessible discussion of the supplement remains *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 141–64.
11. See, for example, Vice President Dick Cheney's response to Tim Russert about John Walker Lindh, the "American Taliban": <http://www.whitehouse.gov/vicepresident/news-speeches/speeches/vp20011209.html>. When asked whether or not Walker is a traitor, even though he is being held, Cheney demurred: "But I don't know all the facts. We don't know all the facts, as a government."
12. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p. 17.
13. Perhaps no image better captures the consolidation of the Bush presidential image than the series of photographs taken at Ground Zero on 14 September 2001, three days after the 11 September 2001 attacks. See, for example, the image of Bush atop a mound of rubble with a bullhorn surrounded by rescue workers: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/images/20010914-9_p7365-23ajpg-515h.html.
14. Quoted in Elisabeth Bumiller, "Keepers of Bush Image Lift Stagecraft to New Heights," *The New York Times*, 16 May 2003: A1.
15. Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 10–11.
16. See any number of images at the www.whitehouse.gov website, as when Bush addressed the Marines at Camp Pendleton in May 2001: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/images/20010529-6.jpg>. Despite repeated requests, I was not able to secure permission to use any of these images of the president. So, I will refer readers to images on the [whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) website by URL. Most of these images can also be accessed at the appropriate "News by Date" webpage.

17. See "Protests Accompany Bush Acceptance Speech," *MSNBC.com*, 2 September 2005, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5822306/>.
18. See, for example, "Lou Dobbs Tonight," *CNN.com*, 27 August 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0408/27/ldt.01.html>.
19. See Bumiller, "Keepers of Bush Image Lift Stagecraft to New Heights."
20. See the iconic image of Bush before the illuminated Statue of Liberty and American Flag on Liberty Island: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/images/20020911-3_liberty2-515h.html.
21. See the image of Bush in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/images/20050915-8_speech-515h.html. See also David Green, "Bush Calls for Bold Plan to Rebuild Coast," *NPR.org*, 15 September 2005, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4850527>.
22. Bumiller, "Keepers of Bush Image Lift Stagecraft to New Heights"; see the image of Bush helping small business: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/images/20030512_d051203-515h.html.
23. See the image of Bush gesturing before Mt. Rushmore: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/images/20020815_d081502-515h.html.
24. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p. 202.
25. See Bumiller, "Keepers of Bush Image Lift Stagecraft to New Heights."
26. See the image of Bush in full flight regalia, talking fighter jock talk with an active duty pilot: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/Images/20030501-15_d050103-2-664v.html.
27. As of November 2006, the White House has also edited the video of Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech at the whitehouse.gov website so that the banner is no longer visible. See "White House Caught Doctoring 'Mission Accomplished' Video," *YouTube.com*, 6 November 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2ITs4yIAE>.
28. See, for example, the Associated Press report, "Chronology on Bush Nat'l Guard Service," *ABC News.com*, 26 October 2005, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=199411&CMP=OTC-RSSFeeds0312>, which presents a look at "some of the shifting explanations President Bush and his spokesmen have given for events in Bush's Texas Air National Guard service." The Bush White House and its operatives successfully turned the question of the president's military service into a problem of representation. Establishing whether or not the president actually served, or what the specific parameters of that service were, quickly took a back seat to the problem of how the service was documented and those documents interpreted. See "White House Releases Bush Military Pay Records," *Fox News.com*, 10 February 2004, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,110956,00.html>. This article also features a link to the documents themselves at http://www.foxnews.com/projects/pdf/021004_bushmil.pdf.
29. This image is still widely available on-line, with Bush in the foreground and the "Mission Accomplished" banner behind him on the conning tower.
30. See the image at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/images/20030501-15_lincoln6-515h.html.
31. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 23.
32. Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 23.
33. According to Scott Shane, the federal government classified a "record 15.6 million documents" in 2004, nearly double that of 2001, and the declassification process has slowed by nearly 70%, from "204 million pages in 1997 to just 28 million pages last year." Shane also reports that Bush has "extended the power to classify documents to the heads of the Environmental Protection Agency, the

- Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture”: “Since 2001, Sharp Increase in the Number of Documents Classified by the Government,” *The New York Times*, 3 July 2005: A14.
34. See the full text of the Third Debate at the *Commission on Presidential Debates* website: <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004c.html>.
 35. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p. 186.
 36. See James Simpson, “The Energies of John Lydgate,” in James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution, 1350–1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 34–67, for a recent rethinking of Lydgate’s place in literary history and in the context of the early fifteenth century. For example, Simpson’s account of Lydgate’s political functions differs somewhat from Strohm’s in that Simpson calls Lydgate an “official” though not a “propagandistic” poet (p. 65).
 37. See John Fisher, “A Language Policy for Lancastrian England,” *PMLA* 107 (1992): 1168–80. See also Malcolm Richardson, “Henry V, the English Chancery, and Chancery English,” *Speculum* 55 (1980): 726–50.
 38. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, pp. 4–5.
 39. See Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, pp. 10–19, for a detailed description of the historical and genealogical revisions of Henry IV’s supporters.
 40. See “President George W. Bush” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/president/gwbbio.html>.
 41. The images from Crawford, dated 8 August 2002, depicting Bush in a cowboy hat driving his truck, clearing brush, and sitting in the bed of his pick-up truck, at some point were made unavailable at the [whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) website.
 42. Nedra Pickler, “Bush’s Ranch Serves Down Home Diplomacy,” *Salon.com*, 4 August 2005, <http://www.salon.com/wire/ap/archive.html?wire=D8BP11UO0.html>. See also “George W. Bush’s Ranch Diplomacy,” *Associated Press*, <http://wid.ap.org/features/ranch/index.html>, for a photo gallery of world leaders invited to share President Bush’s “down-home diplomacy” at “Prairie Chapel Ranch” in Crawford, Texas.
 43. These Crawford sessions happen most often during the president’s August and December vacations. See, for example, “President Meets with Economic Team,” 14 August 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/08/20030814-2.html>.
 44. Of the many articles tracing the change of Bush’s public persona, see, for example, Jake Tapper, “Prodigal Son,” *Salon.com*, 9 April 1999, <http://www.salon.com/news/feature/1999/04/09/bush/index.html>, which details Bush’s baby boomer excesses, and “Busted!” *Salon.com*, 3 November 2000, <http://www.salon.com/politics/feature/2000/11/03/dui/index.html>, which concerns Bush’s 1976 drunk driving arrest; and Joan Walsh, “The First Family’s Alcohol Troubles,” *Salon.com*, 31 May 2001, <http://www.salon.com/politics/feature/2001/05/31/twins/index.html>, tracing a family history of alcohol use.
 45. Alex Johnson, “Bush—Born Again, or Not?” *MSNBC Online*, 28 September 2004, <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6115719/>.
 46. See Arthur Blessitt, “The Day I Prayed with George W. Bush to Receive Jesus!” *blessitt.com*, 3 April 1984, <http://www.blessitt.com/bush.html>.
 47. See Wilfred M. McClay, “Bush’s Calling,” in *Roundup: Historian’s Take* (repr. from *Commentary* magazine), *History News Network*, 5 June 2005, <http://hnn.us/roundup/entries/12417.html>.
 48. See “The Drug Question,” *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, *PBS.org*, 20 August 1999, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec99/bush_8-20.html.
 49. According to the blurb for the DVD release of *Faith in the White House* on the Grizzly Adams Productions website, “Not since the days of George Washington and

- Abraham Lincoln has a president put so much stock in his Christian faith and prayer life for making decisions and leading the United States in its hour of crisis. According to BBC correspondent Justin Webb: ‘Nobody spends more time on his knees than George W. Bush. The Bush administration hums to the sound of prayer’”; <http://www.grizzlyadams.tv/>.
50. Haggard was removed as pastor of his 14,000-member mega-church after admitting to sexual improprieties, possibly with a gay male prostitute. See, for example, “Fired Evangelist Slams Gays in New Movie,” *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, 6 November 2006, http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/movies/1402AP_Film_Ted_Haggard.html.
 51. Mark Moring, Review of *George W. Bush: Faith in the White House*, *Christianity Today*, 24 August 2004, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/reviews/georgewbush.html>.
 52. This strategy also enables the president to further certain evangelical priorities, such as limiting stem cell research, restricting marriage to heterosexual couples only, and denying foreign aid to governments and organizations that support abortion (the “global gag rule” or “Mexico City Policy”). See “President Discusses Stem Cell Research,” 9 August 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010809-2.html>; “President Calls for Constitutional Amendment Protecting Marriage,” 24 February 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/02/20040224-2.html>; and “Restoration of the Mexico City Policy,” 23 January 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/01/20010123-5.html>.
 53. See the full text of President Bush’s 2003 State of the Union Address at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>.
 54. The secretary of state’s full address, with a Power Point slide show, is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030205-1.html>. The Power Point demonstration accompanying the secretary of state’s address is a good example of the administration’s proleptic symbolic strategies.
 55. The best third-party analysis of Iraq’s chemical attacks against the Kurds is Human Rights Watch’s 1993 report “Genocide in Iraq,” <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/>. See also the extensive international documentation assembled by Human Rights Watch, “Background on the Crisis in Iraq,” <http://hrw.org/campaigns/iraq/#Anfal>. See also John King, “Arming Iraq: A Chronology of US Involvement,” *Iran Chamber Society*, March 2003, http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/arming_iraq.php.
 56. The attack on Halabja was officially denounced by the U.S. government, but legislative efforts to punish Iraq militarily or economically (see Peter Gailbraith, “The Prevention of Genocide Act,” available at <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/kurds/genocide.pdf>) passed the Senate in twenty-four hours but then died in the House. See the full account, “The Forgotten People,” *CBC News*, 26 March 2003 (updated February 2004), <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/kurds/>.
 57. The Project for A New American Century (PNAC), “Iraq: Setting the Record Straight,” <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraq-042005.pdf>, attempts to explain why neither WMDs nor the technologies necessary to make them were ever found in Iraq.
 58. A video-capture image of Donald Rumsfeld shaking Saddam Hussein’s hand, as well as documentation on the incident, can be found here: “U.S. Documents Show Embrace of Saddam Hussein in Early 1980s Despite Chemical Weapons, External Aggression, Human Rights Abuses,” *The National Security Archive*, George Washington University, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/press.htm>.
 59. The administration’s shifting reasons for going to war against Iraq have been traced by a number of commentators, both progressive and conservative. One of

- the most humorous, that also parallels my own argument, depicts the Bush rationale as a form of constantly mutating software: P.J. Crowley and Robert O. Boorstin, "Why We Went In: Version 10.0," *Center for American Progress*, 19 March 2004, <http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=bjJRJ8OVF&b=38989>. Conservative arguments are presented not only in PNAC, "Iraq: Setting the Record Straight," but in many other venues; see, for example, Thomas J. Ragazzi, "The Rationale for the Iraq War: Stability of the Region and American Interests Explained," *Axis of Logic*, 24 June 2005, <http://www.axisoflogic.com/cgi-bin/exec/view.pl?archive=130&num=18727&printer=1>.
60. See, for example, Bush's comments to West Point's 2002 graduating class: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>.
 61. See the White House's *Renewal in Iraq* webpage: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/>.
 62. As General Tommy Franks so memorably put it, "We don't do body counts." As of January 2007, the date of the most recent revision of this essay, the Iraq Body Count project places the civilian deaths between 55,373 and 61,060 (see <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>), whereas a study by prestigious British medical journal, *The Lancet*, places the civilian deaths from all causes related to the Iraq War at 655,000: Gilbert Burnham, Riyadh Lafta, Shannon Doocy, Les Roberts, "Mortality After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross Sectional Cluster Sample Survey," *The Lancet*, 12 October 2006, <http://www.thelancet.com/webfiles/images/journals/lancet/0140673606694919.pdf>. See also the analysis of the *Lancet* study: Hamit Dardagan, John Sloboda, and Josh Dougherty, "Reality Checks: Some Responses to the Latest Lancet Estimates," *Iraq Body Count*, 16 October 2006, <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/press/pr14.php>. Current data on military casualties can be found at the *Iraq Coalition Casualty Count* website, <http://icasualties.org/oif/>.
 63. See Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 280 [278-94]. See also Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 49.
 64. "President Bush Discusses Progress in the War on Terror," 12 July 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/07/20040712-5.html>. See also the White House's *Waging and Winning the War on Terror*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/achievement/chap1-nrn.html>.
 65. The question of the Bush administration's disdain for the separation of powers and the legal inhibition of the president's authority has been acutely raised in the recent revelation that the president ordered the National Security Agency to spy on Americans. See Dan Eggan, "Bush Authorized Domestic Spying: Post-9/11 Order Bypassed Special Court," *The Washington Post*, 16 December 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/16/AR2005121600021.html>.
 66. PNAC, "Iraq: Setting the Record Straight." See also Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "The Right War for the Right Reasons," *The Weekly Standard*, 23 February 2004, available at <http://www.weeklystandard.com>.
 67. The Internet is replete with denunciations of postmodernism and its virulent cousin, deconstruction, particularly among the Christian Right. For a relatively constructive engagement with these issues, see Brian McLaren, "An Open Letter to Chuck Colson," *Brian D. McLaren.net*, <http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/000269.html>.
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71. Eric Boehlert, "Fake News, Fake Reporter," *Salon.com*, 10 February 2005, http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2005/02/10/gannon_affair/.
72. See the GOPUSA website, "GOPUSA: Bringing the Conservative Message to America," <http://www.gopusa.com/>. See also the entry on GOPUSA on Daily Kos's on-line political encyclopedia, *dKosopedia*, available at <http://www.dkosopedia.com/index.php/>.
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75. Chris Tryhorn, "US Government Faked Bush News Reports," *Guardian Unlimited*, 16 March 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uselections2004/story/0,13918,1170535,00.html>.
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78. See The Rendon Group's website at <http://www.rendon.com/>.
79. James Bamford, "The Man Who Sold the War," *RollingStone.com*, 17 November 2005, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/_/id/8798997.
80. The Rendon Group's website consistently applies the language of warfare to the uses of information, the analysis of news, and the management of perception (see, again, <http://www.rendon.com/>).
81. Bamford, "The Man Who Sold the War."
82. See The Rendon Group's response to Bamford, "The Man Who Sold the War," at http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/_/id/8868449.
83. See the *National Security Archive* webpage at George Washington University, "Rumsfeld's Roadmap to Propaganda," 26 January 2006, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB177/index.htm>.
84. See the U.S. Department of Defense's *Information Operations Roadmap*, 30 October 2003, p. 4, available at the National Security Archive webpage at George Washington University (cited in n83).
85. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p. 15.
86. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p. 6.
87. The best recent analysis is Michelle Golberg's *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). See also the brief but informative essay by Kenneth Swanson, "American Theocracy," *Christ Church Cathedral.org*, 6 November 2006, www.christcathedral.org/education/American%20Theocracy.doc.
88. "Remarks by the President upon Arrival: The South Lawn," 16 September 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>.
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91. See the United Kingdom Parliament, House of Commons, "Foreign Affairs—Seventh Report," 12 June 2002, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmfaff/384/38402.htm>, for a description of reactions to the 9/11 attacks and the complicated Middle Eastern politics involved.
92. See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
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94. Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 22.
95. Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 19.
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98. See Carroll, "The Bush Crusade."
99. See, for example, the sources and links at "Treating Dissent as Treason," *Source Watch: A Project of the Center for Media and Democracy*, http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Treating_dissent_as_treason.
100. The report is available through the website for the American Council for Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), at <http://www.goacta.org/publications/Reports/defciv.pdf>. For a different, more progressive perspective, see Paul Street, "Defending Civilization and the Myth of Radical Academia," *Z Magazine.org*, 15 July 2002, <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=37&ItemID=2116>. See also Todd Gitlin, "Blaming America First," *Mother Jones.com*, January/February 2002, <http://www.motherjones.com/commentary/columns/2002/01/blaming.html>.
101. Street, "Defending Civilization."
102. Street, "Defending Civilization."
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104. See the summary by Bruce Craig in the *National Coalition for History Washington Update* 11.30, 25 July 2005, <http://www.h-net.org/~nch/>.
105. "Campus Responses" comprises 115 statements that the ACTA writers feel characterize the "Blame America First" attitude among U.S. academics; see ACTA, "Defending Civilization," pp. 13–29.

106. David Horowitz, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2006). The book description reads: "Bestselling author David Horowitz reveals a shocking and perverse culture of academics who are poisoning the minds of today's college students. *The Professors* is a wake-up call to all those who assume that a college education is sans hatred of America and the American military and support for America's terrorist enemies." See also the archives at *Z Magazine* (<http://www.zmag.org/>) for an easily accessible variety of writings by Churchill, Chomsky, and Said. Of the plethora of critical articles critical of Churchill, see Mark Goldblatt, "W. Churchill: A Sad Look at a Sick Academic Bubble," *National Review Online*, 9 February 2005, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/goldblatt200502090753.asp>; for criticism of Chomsky, see Keith Windschuttle, "The Hypocrisy of Noam Chomsky," *The New Criterion*, May 2003, <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/21/may03/chomsky.htm>; and of Said, see Ibn Warraq, "Debunking Edward Said: Edward Said and the Saidists: or Third World Intellectual Terrorism," *Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Society*, 2002, <http://www.secularislam.org/articles/debunking.htm>.
107. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 127.
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CHAPTER 8

TORTURE, INQUISITION, MEDIEVALISM, REALITY, TV

Steve Guthrie

This essay examines the history and practice of torture from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance to contemporary times, in order to trace some of the lines separating “judicial torture” from “punitive torment” (or “village games” sadism), and to also show how the U.S. government’s current use of torture is indeed “medieval,” but in a more complex and troublesome way than popular understanding of the term comprehends

The main thing is to make the prisoner feel that he does not belong to the same species.

—Jean-Paul Sartre, Introduction to
The Question by Henri Alleg

We in the army of God, in the house of God, kingdom of God have been raised for such a time as this.

—Lt. Gen. William Boykin

Torture is only cruel and unusual if we don’t do it all that often.

—Stephen Colbert, *The Colbert Report*

The interest of the American and British public in the practice of torture, in the wake of Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and the still somewhat secret prison camps in Europe and Asia, is part of a long-standing fascination with the Middle Ages, or rather with a popular image of the period, epitomized in Ving Rhames’s indelible line in *Pulp Fiction*, “I’m gonna get medieval on your ass.”¹ The fascination has grown in this decade under the influence of world events, or rather of widespread American impressions of world events. After the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, American commentators often wrote of the Taliban regime, or of the country as a whole, as “medieval,”² and network TV correspondents often spoke of the feeling that they had stepped back in time.³ The 2003 invasion of Iraq brought similar comments about the “medieval mindset” of the global enemy and the “medieval

barbarity” of Saddam Hussein’s rule.⁴ Reports of “medieval torture devices” were common in print and broadcast media and on the Internet,⁵ and Hussein’s use of torture on his subjects at Abu Ghraib prison was one reason given for the invasion, along with the weapons of mass destruction, aluminum centrifuge tubes, and yellowcake uranium from Niger. After the revelation in 2004 of the ongoing U.S. practice of torture at the same prison, liberals decried Bush’s medieval methods, and conservatives defended them as the necessary response to a barbarous enemy. (They forced us to get medieval on their asses.) Both sides agreed that the methods were medieval, and both sides shared an understanding of the term.

Our use of torture is indeed medieval, although in a more complex and troublesome way than popular understanding of the term comprehends. Physical brutality itself is not especially medieval—it seems to be an inclination of the species—and most of the techniques and machines used now are either ancient or modern in origin, but the political and emotional climate of the phenomenon, and the legal policies it rests on, have counterparts in late medieval and renaissance Europe. Our fascination with things superficially medieval can be read as the expression of awareness on some level of this deeper cultural contact.

In February 2005, Channel 4 (United Kingdom) aired *Guantanamo Guidebook*, part two of a four-part series whose purpose was to investigate torture in light of U.S. practice at Abu Ghraib and in light of evidence connecting that practice to the interrogation of detainees at Guantanamo Bay and to the CIA training manuals that lay behind the interrogation. The other three programs were documentaries: on the Guantanamo detention center; on the leading role of the United States, and the complicity of Britain, in worldwide torture; and on the U.S. prison system.⁶ *Guantanamo Guidebook* was a reality show. Its contestants were seven British citizens, all of them male, three of them Muslim, who had applied to take part as torture victims; they included a triathlete, a kickboxer, a youth worker, and an Oxford undergraduate. Each prisoner was given “information” that it was his goal to protect during a forty-eight-hour period of interrogation. Participants were kept in wire cages in a London warehouse and subjected to “stress positions, sleep deprivation, removal of clothing, exposure to extremes of temperature, mild noninjurious physical contact, interrogation, etc.,” according to Yad Luthra, the show’s producer. “Obviously, what the volunteers endured was mild in comparison to the treatment of the real Guantanamo detainees.”⁷ Even so, one participant (the triathlete) left after seven hours on account of incipient hypothermia, a second left on religious grounds, a third quit after forty hours, and “[t]wo vomited and two wet in their pants. . . . The torturers were quite tough on them.”⁸

The interrogators were members of Team Delta, a group of former members of U.S. Special Forces units who have managed to put their training to use in civilian life. The group’s website describes programs for civilians in “POW Interrogation Resistance Training,” “Interrogator Workshop,” and “Corporate Workshops,” among other topics, and announces its availability “for Media Appearances.” One frame on the homepage advertises Team Delta’s involvement in *Guantanamo Guidebook* over the legend, “We Can Make You Talk.”⁹

A report on the experience by one of the volunteers, Prisoner 73 (the Oxford student and forty-hour prisoner), posted on the Team Delta website, records both

the techniques applied and their effects:¹⁰

Staying hydrated was crucial and we found that it helped offset hunger, but during the march we inevitably had to urinate. The guards simply told us they weren't stopping us and we had to urinate while walking. It was initially embarrassing: "What are you doing to my floor?! You dog!"—but because it was forced, it made me more angry and resolute than humiliated. Rooms were never heated—at first we protested to the guards, but they pointed out that the room wasn't cold, merely "chilly" and within the rules. . . .

Pure white lights always lit the room and by moving prayer times and playing bird song in the mid afternoon, the guards ensured we rapidly lost all sense of time. Knowing our experience would end within a certain amount of time was central to our morale, and to lose grasp of time was a blow. At one stage we were convinced that we had passed the half way mark, before realizing—from our lack of hunger—that we could only have been in for 12 hours. It was crushing. . . .

...[T]he endless exercise and stress positions were more about mental intimidation. At first I started to believe that some guards were more demanding than others, but after a day I came to the realization that I simply detested them all; yet on some level there was still a part of me that wanted to "measure up," to show I could do their exercises as if I could somehow earn their respect. It's a crazy thought, but one of the things I found so dispiriting was to finish a set of exercises, believe I had proved myself, only for the next guard to walk in and ask why I was resting on the floor and set more exercises. I could not accumulate the mutual respect that on some fundamental level we, as humans, seek in each other every day.¹¹

In some ways *Guantanamo Guidebook* is atypical of reality TV. Reality shows often impose physical duress, but in a show like *Survivor*, the duress is environmental; there is community of sorts (though fragile because of the built-in threat of treachery), based on Hollywood stereotypes of tribal society; there are trials, and even ordeals (build a shelter, eat a bug, get along with the other contestants), but dealing with them permits an active response to circumstance, and getting through them is a means to the end of winning a great deal of money. *Survivor* is a cross between the corporate retreat (teamwork in the service of personal ambition) and the culturally pervasive *Robinson Crusoe* fantasy. In *Guantanamo Guidebook*, by contrast, duress was artificial, community was impossible, and there were no prizes, no winners, no goal beyond endurance, and, most important, no opportunity for active response by contestants. They weren't even really contestants; the show was a passion play in the root sense.

In other ways, *Guantanamo Guidebook* is the logical extension both of reality TV and of TV news. When a war is televised not as current event but as morality play, it makes sense that investigative journalism should take the form of improvisational theater. Reality show contestants often act out the daydreams of a prosperous audience by testing themselves against a world outside the comfort and convenience of modern post-industrial life: the desert island, the Victorian kitchen, the trailer park. A detention center is a step or two closer to the wild side, with the added fascination of the military setting for those without actual experience of prison or war. It is a measure of present reality that citizens of a European democracy were asked to volunteer for *Guidebook*, that it took interviews and background checks to limit the cast to seven, that a squad of American interrogators was available to torture the volunteers on camera, and that Channel 4

created the show on the premise that it would attract viewers—and also, presumably, on the premise that it would attract viewers to the more traditional kinds of investigation displayed in the other three episodes of the series.

There are clear differences and disturbing similarities between *Guantanamo Guidebook* and the real interrogations it imitated. One difference, easy to overlook, is that in the Channel 4 version, each prisoner had specific intelligence for his torturers to extort, so the interrogations had an achievable end, whereas the great majority of prisoners at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib have had no relevant information to protect. The most obvious difference is that the account of Channel 4's Prisoner 73 records a make-believe interrogation that he could have ended at any point and did end before the assigned forty-eight-hour term. But this is also what is chilling about his account: it differs in degree and outcome (he walked away and returned to his normal life), but in its sketch of the victim's mind it resembles the accounts of real torture victims.¹²

The focus of the *Guidebook* interrogations on the psychology of the victim is close to the focus of real torture. The Team Delta homepage ("We can make you talk") seems silly, but members of the group come from careers as real interrogators, and the techniques they used for TV are consistent with the ones used in real detention centers. The element of self-parody is also eerily familiar; the tone of the website resonates with the widely published photos of Army specialists Lynndie England and Charles Graner, posed grinning over heaps of naked Iraqis at Abu Ghraib.¹³

Another similarity between *Guidebook* and Abu Ghraib is the element of theater. Susan Sontag wrote of the staged quality of the Abu Ghraib photographs,¹⁴ but it is the specific tone of the performance that is telling: these are sadistic parodies of summer vacation snapshots. In an essay written shortly before her death, Sontag protested the inhumanity of the episode: "The principal justification for holding them is 'interrogation.' Interrogation about what? About anything. Whatever the detainees might know. If interrogation is the point of detaining prisoners indefinitely, then physical coercion, humiliation and torture become inevitable."¹⁵ Rush Limbaugh, reacting to the same images, dismissed them as good clean fun: "This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation, and we're going to ruin people's lives over it, and we're going to hamper our military effort, and then we are really going to hammer them because they had a good time. . . . You know, these people are being fired every day. I'm talking about people having a good time, these people. You ever heard of emotional release?"¹⁶ Our culture is stretched between these two responses.

The effectiveness of the Team Delta agents in *Guantanamo Guidebook* derived from their experience and training. The group's name, military background, and advertised areas of expertise identify its members with the Army's Delta Force, which has been involved in commando operations on several continents and in the interrogations at Guantanamo, where the detention center is named Camp Delta. As Special Forces trainees, they would have participated in a program called SERE, which was developed for the army in the 1950s and expanded in the 1970s to include all branches of the military. SERE stands for "Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape"; the program was formed to train American personnel at high risk of capture to withstand the kinds of torture that Soviet-bloc enemies might be expected to use on them.¹⁷ Techniques applied to trainees

include hooding, sleep deprivation, starvation, nudity, extreme temperatures, waterboarding, sexual ridicule of male trainees by females, and desecration of the Bible.¹⁸ The men who played the role of torturer on TV were recycling their own training as torture victims.

The overlap between these techniques and the ones used on *Guantanamo Guidebook* volunteers is clear. They are meant to break the prisoner's resistance by destroying his sense of reality and, ultimately, his sense of self—as Prisoner 73 put it, “that sense of mutual respect that on some fundamental level we, as humans, seek in each other every day.” The most complete account by a modern torture victim is that of Henri Alleg, a white Algerian journalist and resistance sympathizer tortured by the French in Algeria; his book, *La Question*, describes techniques far more physically brutal, but their objective was precisely the same.¹⁹ In his preface to Alleg's memoir, Sartre speaks of torture as a means of proving Otherness: “The purpose of torture is not only to make a person talk, but to make him betray others. The victim must turn himself by his screams and by his submission into a lower animal, in the eyes of all and in his own eyes. His betrayal must destroy him and take away his human dignity. He who gives way under questioning is not only constrained from talking again, but is given a new status, that of a sub-man.”²⁰

The SERE techniques also closely resemble the techniques used at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. They come from two CIA interrogation manuals written during the Cold War and used extensively in Vietnam, in the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, and elsewhere. Alfred McCoy has pointed out that the Abu Ghraib photo of the hooded man—the iconic image of the American presence there—is textbook CIA: the sensory deprivation disorients the subject, and the self-inflicted pain of the prolonged stress position inflicts both physical and psychological harm, with the psychological effects essential for the purpose.²¹ (Even so, the physical effects are severe, systemic, and surprisingly quick. Donald Rumsfeld questioned putting a time limit on such stress positions, arguing that he works at a stand-up desk for long periods; the difference is that he never stood there for eight hours without moving.)

Both CIA manuals predate the Bush administration. The first is *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation* (July 1963; Kennedy administration); Section Nine of *KUBARK, The Coercive Counterintelligence Interrogation of Resistant Sources*, is particularly relevant to Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. The second is the Honduras *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual—1983* (Reagan administration).²² The 1963 manual was the basis for the 1983 manual; the details of both suggest links to the acts of torture performed by the Honduran Battalion 316 in the early 1980s and to similar acts by similar squads throughout Latin America, as well as to the details of interrogation practice at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.²³ Both manuals are Cold War documents, mixtures of age-old methods of torture by deprivation and torture by chronic and acute physical pain with modern technological variations on those techniques (in particular those involving electricity), and also with the addition of modern techniques of psychological and pharmacological torture (brainwashing, sexual humiliation, hypnosis, drug-induced disorientation and psychosis). *KUBARK* advocates the use of stress positions,²⁴ which in itself is a medieval technique; the modern wrinkle is that when the prisoner is required to place and keep himself in a

position of stress, the technique has an added psychological effect. *KUBARK* emphasizes that “[c]oercive procedures are designed not only to exploit the resistant source’s internal conflicts and induce him to wrestle with himself but also to bring a superior outside force to bear upon the subject’s resistance.”²⁵ In short, “the prisoner should not be provided a routine to which he can adapt and from which he can draw some comfort—or at least a sense of his own identity.”²⁶

Confession is not in itself the goal but is “a necessary prelude to the CIA interrogation of a hitherto unresponsive or concealing source.”²⁷ The ultimate goal is to get information not about the prisoner’s crimes but about his associates; and from a similar viewpoint, to break down the prisoner’s selfhood, to destroy his mind so that his body will tell the truth. Once broken psychologically, or at least made vulnerable to blackmail, he will continue to provide information after his release. A goal of intelligence gathering at Abu Ghraib has also been to “turn” prisoners in this way.²⁸ Apart from the inability of Abu Ghraib detainees to end the experience at will, this focus on the prisoner’s community is perhaps the key difference between real torture and the *Guantanamo Guidebook* variety.

There is a direct link between Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib in the person of General Geoffrey Miller, Guantanamo commandant, who was sent to Abu Ghraib in August 2003 to set up procedures to speed the interrogation process there.²⁹ The techniques made public at Abu Ghraib in 2004 are the same in principle as *KUBARK*-Guantanamo techniques, although the sexual humiliation and physical abuse at Abu Ghraib were more severe and more imaginative than in the more—or differently—controlled environment at Guantanamo. The apparent chaos of the Abu Ghraib operation led many commentators, including James Schlesinger in his role as official investigator, to dismiss the abuses as “free-lance activities on the part of the night shift.”³⁰ The photographic record includes the following images, among others: naked, hooded men piled on a concrete floor, a naked man on a leash, another naked man bleeding profusely from a dogbite, men with women’s underpants on their heads, one of them manacled to a windowframe behind him in a medieval stress position called *strappado*, and a battered corpse, supine in a bag of ice, with, in alternate photographs, Army specialists Charles Graner and Sabrina Harman bending, grinning, over the form. This is the corpse of Manadel al-Jamadi, referred to as “the iceman” because his body was packed in ice, apparently to conceal the time and cause of death.³¹ The probable cause of death was the *strappado*.

It is possible that the army specialists in the photographs thought themselves free agents, but it is impossible that they were; the pattern of abuse is too recognizable, and the links to the CIA textbooks too direct. What occurred at Abu Ghraib, and may still occur there and at other camps, was purposeful. At the same time, there is something in the photographs not accounted for by the CIA manuals, and it may be this that misled investigators. The images of the prisoners themselves are illustrations of *KUBARK* techniques, but the Americans in the pictures belong to a different register, that of simple human cruelty—Limbaugh’s fraternity initiations and beyond. They are not there to get information; they are there to inflict pain and to memorialize the infliction of pain. To make a crucial distinction, established under Roman and medieval law, they are engaged in punitive torment, not judicial torture. In September 2001, Dick Cheney forecast

the administration's approach to interrogations: "We also have to work, though, sort of the dark side, if you will. We've got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world."³² These American faces are the dark side of U.S. policy.

It is a side with a history. The people immediately responsible for the abuses at Abu Ghraib were members of the 372nd Military Police Company, working together with military intelligence officers. Of the six members of the company who were targets of the Army's Article 32 hearing in April 2004, the two leaders were Specialist Charles Graner and Staff Sergeant Ivan Frederick, who had been put in charge because they had been prison guards in civilian life.³³ Higher in the chain of command was O. Lane McCotter, whom John Ashcroft hired in the summer of 2003 as a civilian contractor to supervise the opening of U.S. military prisons in Iraq, including the conversion of Abu Ghraib. McCotter started by running military prisons, then became commandant of the Disciplinary Barracks at Leavenworth. In 1984, he left the military to become assistant director of the Texas Department of Corrections, and in 1985 he became executive director of the Texas prison system. From there he moved to parallel jobs in New Mexico and then Utah, leaving the last job in 1997 and joining M&TC. McCotter left all three state jobs under pressure and under investigation, and M&TC was under investigation by the Justice Department when Ashcroft hired McCotter to run the prisons in Iraq.³⁴

The pattern of abuse at Abu Ghraib resembles the pattern recorded in Texas, New Mexico, and Utah. In Texas, McCotter employed Special Operations Response Teams that beat prisoners, made them strip naked, imposed stress positions, committed and ordered prisoners to commit various kinds of sexual assault, and, according to witnesses, did it all with enthusiasm. During McCotter's two years in Texas, at least twelve prisoners died in custody in questionable circumstances.³⁵ In Utah, he was forced to resign when a schizophrenic prisoner died after being strapped naked to a restraint chair for sixteen hours. In the *L.A. Times* in May 2004, Robert Bastian wrote, "The hard fact is that the US installed in Iraq an American-style approach to prison management."³⁶ In *The New York Times* in June 2004, Bob Herbert wrote, "Most Americans were shocked by the sadistic treatment at the Abu Ghraib prison. But we shouldn't have been... Inmates at prisons in the United States [are] frequently subjected to similarly grotesque treatment."³⁷ In other words, specialists Graner and Frederick had been well trained for their work at Abu Ghraib, and the willing cooperation of the "hapless amateurs"³⁸ under their control, natural sadists or not, is entirely plausible. As Stanley Milgram demonstrated in *Obedience to Authority* (1974), normal human beings adapt with surprising ease to situations in which they believe they are torturing other normal human beings under instruction from a person in authority, in this case a professor of psychology.³⁹

What happens in prisons also happens in police stations, and in that setting it does amount to judicial torture, legal or not. The fifth and fourteenth amendments (self-incrimination; right to life, liberty, property, and due process), and less directly, the fourth and eighth amendments (unreasonable search and seizure; cruel and unusual punishment) seem to forbid the practice of torture, but there is no explicit constitutional proscription. In the nineteenth century, the absence of both judicial and public oversight permitted the development of a new phenomenon, the systematic practice of metropolitan police torture,⁴⁰ a practice that

was and is extra-judicial and illegal but also widespread and tacitly accepted by the public, except when unusually dramatic cases of abuse force themselves into the public eye.⁴¹

The Bluhm Legal Clinic at Northwestern University, through its Center on Wrongful Convictions, has been responsible for the release of several death row inmates in Illinois, and its work was directly responsible for Governor George Ryan's 2000 moratorium on executions in the state. A fairly typical case is that of Leroy Orange, one of fourteen men receiving death sentences on the basis of confessions made under torture in South Side Chicago police stations in the 1980s.⁴² Orange was subjected to beatings, suffocation, and electric shock intermittently during a twelve-hour interrogation in 1984; these and other techniques were and are in widespread use by metropolitan police forces throughout the country. They target the poor, and especially poor African-American and other Black men, and they are both a means and a proof of degradation and disenfranchisement. Because the practice is illegal (prosecutable as assault, violation of civil rights, etc.), it is not judicial torture in a technical sense; but public acquiescence has sanctioned it, and it is one of several grey areas in modern jurisprudence.

One obvious question about this *de facto* judicial torture is why it should occur systematically in the presence of modern forensic science, which to a large extent solves the main problem of evidentiary proceedings in earlier periods. The answer seems to be that police torture is a colonial enterprise; it targets those already profiled as in some way foreign, Other—Blacks always, and other groups depending on the place and the crisis of the moment—who, in the eyes of authority, must have something to hide, and who do have something that they cannot hide: their physical and social difference, their rejection of police authority, and their anger. From this viewpoint, Abu Ghraib is only Chicago for the export market.

H. Rap Brown once said that violence is as American as apple pie, but the thread linking Abu Ghraib, the American prison system, and metropolitan police practices is not merely violence but sadism. Barbara Tuchman writes of a medieval village game in which "players with hands tied behind them competed to kill a cat nailed to a post by battering it to death with their heads, at the risk of cheeks ripped open or eyes scratched out by the frantic animal's claws."⁴³ Thomas More describes the game of cock-stele, in which a cockerel was buried up to its neck in the ground and schoolboys aimed sticks or arrows at its head.⁴⁴ Jim Hightower tells a story told to him by Terry Throckmorton, a boyhood friend of George W. Bush in Midland, Texas: "Terry noted that a low spot behind Bush's house would fill with water after a good rain, and thousands of frogs would come out. 'We'd put firecrackers in the frogs and throw them and blow them up.'"⁴⁵ There is, or ought to be, a basic difference between village games and national policy. In medieval law the difference is firmly entrenched; in current American law it is hedged to the vanishing point. The burden of the following pages is to establish this claim.

Torture has a long history in the Western world; its basic philosophy, techniques, tools, and conundrums (Aristotle argued that evidence given under compulsion is unreliable, for reasons of human psychology and physiology: one victim who knows something may prefer torture to disclosure and may have the strength to resist compulsion; another who knows nothing may

say whatever the interrogator wants to hear in order to avoid pain)⁴⁶ were articulated in ancient Greece, and its legal history dates from Justinian, and again from the Italian scholars who recodified Justinian for the High and Late Middle Ages. Torture appears in written law with the growth of the abstract state, as justice by contest gives way over time to justice by trial; the process occurred in ancient Greece and again in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the tribe or principality, crime is personal injury, prosecution is by accusation, guilt or innocence is determined by oath or ordeal, and justice is normally achieved by reparation; a public official oversees and adjudicates, but society has no direct stake in the specific outcome. The oath of the accused, backed if necessary by corroborating oaths, measures standing in society and therefore before the court. In extreme cases (capital crime where the accused is of ill-repute) the ordeal measures inner truth: if one is innocent, God will not let the hot iron burn one's skin. Under the abstract state, by contrast, the state itself is the victim of crime; it controls and formalizes the judicial process and initiates judicial proceedings. A trial depends on evidence, and in the absence of modern forensic science, the two key kinds of evidence are confession and eyewitness testimony.⁴⁷

The twelfth century placed a new emphasis on Roman law, on written law in general, and on its own legal scholarship, beginning with the rediscovery of Justinian's *Corpus Juris Civilis*. After the early part of the century, there was increasing use of the commentaries and statutes in the *Digest* and *Code* portions of the *Corpus*, first in Italy and France and then elsewhere as well. Under this influence, justice by inquest (*quaestio*, whence *la question* [the question] for the process of interrogation and, euphemistically, for the process of torture) replaced justice by accusation and oath. Ecclesiastical as well as civil law took part in the revolution—Gratian's *Decretum* (ca. 1140) became the authority in canon law for hundreds of years—and each continued to influence the other throughout the period. With the centralization of political power in both spheres (the development of principalities into states, the growing power of the papacy, and the tense but frequent cooperation of various secular authorities with transnational church authority), there were conscious efforts to standardize legal procedures throughout Europe.

Given the need for proof and the unreliability of witnesses, confession became crucial to conviction; in capital cases it was essential, and for that reason the practice of torture became increasingly a part of normal judicial process. At first, the concept of ill-repute created a scale of civil rights and vulnerabilities based on social standing, but over time the rights of respectable citizens eroded as well. The torture of the upper classes was limited to cases of *crimen exceptum*, crime "so dangerous to society and outrageous to God that its prosecution procedure was permitted enormous latitude," in other words, treason or heresy;⁴⁸ the two are similar, and the legal definition of heresy invokes the concept of treason against God.⁴⁹ By the fourteenth century, the class of exceptional crimes had grown, and two types of judicial proceeding were codified, the *proces ordinaire* and the *proces extraordinaire*, with torture a normal part of the latter.⁵⁰ In general, capital offenses were torturable offenses, but the judge in a specific case decided which process to invoke, and the need to produce results tended to reverse the frequencies of the two processes; extraordinary measures became ordinary.⁵¹

In the ancient world, torture had been used to guarantee the truth of evidence given by irresponsible witnesses (slaves, foreigners, those of ill-repute), under the premise that the mind can deceive but not the body. In the Middle Ages, torture was used in a different way. Gratian, following a long tradition of ecclesiastical law, specifically forbade the use of confession given under torture as evidence and forbade clerics (but not secular officials) to administer torture.⁵² At first both civil and ecclesiastical law recognized the ban, and as a result, torture came to be seen not as proof but as a means of compelling proof. Preferably it stopped just short of confession, and the accused confessed freely after it ended; if he blurted out his confession under torture, he was given time to recover and then asked to repeat it freely in another place, away from the scene of compulsion.⁵³

Because torture was a serious matter, proceedings were strictly regulated. Torture must be supervised by a magistrate or other official; it might result in grave injury or even death, but its purpose must be to gain confession or information, not to injure or kill;⁵⁴ thus, the legal distinction between judicial torture and punitive torment is the intent of the agent. The usual physical constraints were that torture must stop short of death or serious injury; it might not maim or cause excessive loss of blood.⁵⁵ The bull *Ad extirpanda* of Pope Innocent IV (1252), addressed to the inquisition of heretics, forbids “injuring the body or causing the danger of death.”⁵⁶ The accused had the right to defense and the right to know (though not to confront) the witnesses and evidence against him.⁵⁷ Torture could be used only when there was one eyewitness or other probable cause;⁵⁸ it became a way of clearing the books, of satisfying the legal requirement of confession: in effect it could be used—this is crucial—only on someone whom the court already knew to be guilty.

During the Late Middle Ages, the use of torture spread through the model provided by the inquisition of heresy. Both church and state were involved, and normally their cooperation was necessary. Civil and ecclesiastical lawyers had similar legal training, but the church had the resources to coordinate international campaigns, as well as a direct interest in the spiritual aspect of the crime; and states had the power to impose punishment and to confiscate property. The worst penalty an ecclesiastical court could impose was excommunication (although it could and did ask the convict to take himself to prison voluntarily as penance), but under the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, clerics could prosecute the case and hand the convict over to civil authorities for punishment; and under the bull *Ad extirpanda*, secular governments were required to aid the church in its war on heresy.⁵⁹ Confiscated property was divided between church and state, with a share to the inquisitors to be invested in the further conduct of their job.

The Inquisition took shape amid wide and growing fear of subversion. When the Albigensian Crusades ended open resistance to orthodoxy, the church remained convinced that heretical cells still proliferated underground. A series of thirteenth-century bulls and other decrees addressed the crisis. The Fourth Lateran Council proclaimed the obligation of both the church and secular states to root out heresy. Frederick II of Navarre in 1232 put his state at the command of the pope in the investigation of heresy, and the church enforced the principle throughout Europe. The Council of Beziers in 1234 ordered priests to make lists of suspected heretics and to watch their activities. Pope Innocent IV

in 1252 issued *Ad extirpanda*, which authorized the inquisition of heretics, prescribed administrative procedures down to the local level, and ordered secular rulers to torture all suspects who would not confess. In 1256, Pope Alexander IV, in the bull *Ut negotium*, “in order to expedite the work of faith that you carry out,” allowed clerical inquisitors to absolve one another for sins committed in the process,⁶⁰ thus solving the problem of Gratian’s ban of torture by priests; and in 1257 he explicitly permitted inquisitional torture by clerics. Also in 1257, Alexander claimed the right to override any civil law that presented an obstacle to the Inquisition. At the end of the third quarter of the thirteenth century, Pope Gregory X both regulated and further institutionalized the process by enlisting the cooperation of episcopal authorities with inquisitors in sentencing decisions. From this point on, the war against heresy was seen as a perpetual war, and the Inquisition was seen as “a permanent part of the machinery of the Church.”⁶¹ This open-endedness—the climate of endless response to endless threat—is the key to the Inquisition. The state of exception (executive license to extralegal power) is a predictable state response to abnormal circumstance but one normally addressed to a finite conflict with a definable end. The Inquisition called not just for a global but a perpetual “war on heresy” and for a state of exception without term.

In civil courts, in ordinary ecclesiastical courts, and initially in twelfth- and thirteenth-century courts of inquisition, the accused had most of the rights we tend to regard as modern. By the fourteenth century, however, a person suspected of heresy, and therefore subject to torture, was the same as guilty: he had no right to counsel or public trial, no right to know the charges brought or the witnesses and evidence assembled, and no right to the presumption of innocence; if the person’s guilt were not manifest, then the use of torture would not apply.⁶² There was still concern for the heretic’s soul, and judicial confession became on one level an extreme kind of sacramental confession: to extract the truth was as much in the prisoner’s interest as in the court’s. In theory, the accused heretic could be tortured only once, but if he refused to confess, more torture could be ordered, at whatever interval, as a continuation (as opposed to a repetition) of the process.⁶³ Critics of the proceedings also had no rights: anyone interfering with an inquisition became excommunicate, and if his condition persisted for a year, he became legally a heretic, subject to burning without trial.⁶⁴

An inquisition differed from a civil trial in its focus, in theory, on thoughts rather than acts. The real enemy was Satan, and the inquisitor, by guile and force, “was required to penetrate the inscrutable heart of man”⁶⁵ in order to root out the evil. In practice, confession was one of two goals; the other was information, and before confession could be considered complete, the accused had to name his associates (as ordered in *Ad extirpanda*). Even parish priests were urged to surrender the names of sacramental confessants who might have heretical views. Bernard de Gui, fourteenth-century inquisitor of the Cathars and author of the manual *Practica Inquisitionis Heretice Pravitatis*, wrote that “[t]he object of the Inquisition is the destruction of heresy. Heresy cannot be destroyed unless heretics are destroyed; heretics cannot be destroyed unless their defenders and fautors [i.e., aiders and abettors] are destroyed, and this is effected in two ways, viz, when they are converted to the true Catholic faith, or when, on being abandoned to the secular arm, they are corporally burned.”⁶⁶

The Inquisition, and torture, came late and imperfectly to England. Between 1307 and 1311, Philip II of France and Pope Clement V held competing inquisitions of the wealthy and powerful order of the Templars. By 1309 these developed into an uneasy joint venture under papal authority. In 1307, Philip asked Edward II of England and other European monarchs to cooperate; Edward ignored the request for as long as possible but eventually imprisoned English members of the order, although apparently no one was tortured and no confessions were obtained. In 1309, impatient with Edward's delays, the English bishops asked the archbishop of Canterbury, as a last resort (because of the potential embarrassment to England), to order the transport (the modern term is extraordinary rendition) of all prisoners to Ponthieu (which Edward held at the time), where they could be tortured without obstacle.⁶⁷ In the end three English Templars confessed to spitting on the cross, and the mission was avoided.

The inquisition of the Templars provided two kinds of legal precedent. The long list of charges included participation in the black arts, which offered a basis for similar charges during the following centuries and thus for the seventeenth-century witch trials, both in England and in America.⁶⁸ More important, however, the procedures of this inquisition were unprecedented, and the order itself was unique as a target of the charge of heresy. The Templars were a modern organization; their wealth and power lay in the corporate holdings of the order rather than in those of individual knights, and it was the order itself, and its wealth and power, that interested both Clement V and Philip II. All previous inquisitions had been against persons accused of specific heretical beliefs, but the indictment of the Templars included the corporate entity and listed practices rather than ideas. In fact it named no specific doctrinal heresy.⁶⁹ Clement ordered parallel inquisitions of individual members and of the order itself; the individuals were tried first, and then the order was brought to trial. This created an additional problem: the proceedings required defenders of the order, but the only available defenders were convicted heretics; to be eligible to defend the order, they must recant, but upon recanting they would be immediately subject to conviction for a relapse into heresy. In cases of relapse, no further trial was necessary. In the end, fifty-four members did recant, and when the trial ended they were burned as relapsed heretics.⁷⁰ The order was dissolved in 1312, and Clement awarded most of its property to the Order of Hospitallers, with a portion apparently going to Philip.⁷¹

During this period the church moved repeatedly to extend its power and to assert its superiority to civil authority, and at the same time it saw itself as vulnerable to growing threats, both from secular states and from within the church. In response it resorted to five striking precedents: the calling of a crusade against a Christian sect (the Albigensians, or Cathars); the assertion of papal power to nullify or ignore contrary secular laws; the perpetual inquisition of heresy; the inquisition of a corporate entity on apparently political rather than theological grounds; and the institution of torture, against a long tradition of ecclesiastical law, in the conduct of judicial inquiry.

One reason for Edward's reluctance to help the inquisition of the Templars may have been a fear of the subsequent prosecution of inquisitors and their agents in jury trials under English common law, which forbade cruel treatment of a prisoner prior to conviction and sentencing, and which held responsible for such treatment not only its physical agent but also royal officials higher up the chain

of command.⁷² Another reason may have been the traditional tension in English attitudes toward the monarchy. Attitudes toward the monarchy—or of the monarchy toward itself—changed, however, with the Renaissance. The first use of the rack either closely predated or closely followed the Tudor accession,⁷³ but judicial torture by the rack or the manacles (similar to *strappado*) was unquestionably well-entrenched under Henry VIII and Elizabeth.⁷⁴ During Henry's reign, "the power of the crown was largely extended, and the doctrine became fashionable that, though under the law no one could be tortured for confession or evidence, yet outside and above the law the royal prerogative was supreme, and that a warrant from the King in Privy Council fully justified the use of the rack and the introduction of the secret inquisitorial process."⁷⁵

During Elizabeth's reign, Sir Thomas Smith wrote that "[t]orment or question, which is used by order of the civile law and custome of other countries . . . is not used in England."⁷⁶ Yet "a few years later, we find the same Sir Thomas writing to Lord Burghley, in 1571, respecting two miserable wretches whom he was engaged in racking under a warrant from Queen Elizabeth."⁷⁷ Sir Edward Coke wrote in his *Institutes* that "there is no law to warrant tortures in this land, nor can they be justified by any prescription, being so lately brought in";⁷⁸ but again, "in 1603, there is a warrant addressed to Coke and Fleming, as Attorney and Solicitor General, directing them to apply torture to a servant of Lord Hundsdon, who had been guilty of some idle speeches respecting King James, and the resultant confession is in Coke's handwriting, showing that he personally superintended the examination."⁷⁹

During the sixteenth century, a torture warrant could be issued for crimes of treason or theft;⁸⁰ the first recorded torture of a gentleman was of a member of Wyatt's Rebellion.⁸¹ In the second half of the century there were standing torture warrants, empowering the bearer to torture unnamed suspects of treason or any felony.⁸² Amid growing fear of invasion, civil uprising, and Catholicism, the concepts of treason and heresy became linked as Elizabeth moved against the overlapping categories of political enemies and the counter-reformation.⁸³ Of the eighty-one torture warrants whose records have survived, at least fifty-four are for treason, sedition, or "religion." Francis Bacon (not yet Sir Francis) is listed as officiating officer in five of the cases.⁸⁴ The death toll among priests from the English inquisition of Catholics was 187; trials "were often harsh in the extreme, torture being regularly used on a captured priest to make him reveal the underground network of which he was part and which grew in strength all this time."⁸⁵ The key to judicial torture in both the Inquisition and the English Renaissance is clear from the thirteenth-century abrogation of contrary civil laws and from the policy of Henry VIII: torture was conducted not under the law but above the law, by imperial authority that held itself to be invulnerable to law.

Judicial torture disappeared in England before the end of the seventeenth century; Lea gives 1640 as the date of its last attested use,⁸⁶ and Heath gives 1673.⁸⁷ Coke's Second and Third *Institutes*, published posthumously before the Civil War, argued vehemently against the practice and possibly helped prevent its reimposition on common law procedures.⁸⁸ Judicial torture is generally considered to have disappeared in European law by the end of the eighteenth century. At this point, as Michel Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, "torment of the body gave way to coercion of the mind through the modern prison system."⁸⁹

Foucault tends to conflate judicial torture and punitive torment, which is somewhat confusing in an account of the institutional structures of behavior. With respect to punishment, the obvious qualification is that modern prisons are store-houses of physical coercion. Even prison architecture resembles medieval devices of chronic physical torment; the “hole” of solitary confinement is derived from a medieval space whose origin lies in the even more cramped space of the ancient Roman *mala mansio*. With respect to judicial torture, the well-documented abuses of, for example, U.S. police interrogations seem to focus on the body in old-fashioned ways. These are illegal, but they are an accepted part of the judicial system.

The illustrations just given of the late medieval Inquisition and of England under the Tudors—the one a transnational Catholic religious state, the other a secular Protestant state bent on uprooting Catholicism—lead to a general observation. Immunity to torture is a measure of citizenship, and citizenship is fragile in time of crisis. The use of torture tends to expand under empire: as state interests expand, real and imagined threats to the state correspondingly expand, and the state takes more and more extreme measures to protect itself. The interests of the state come to be identified with the interests of the emperor’s class and the emperor; his privilege is absolute, and his decree overrides existing law and custom. Everyone else, and in extreme situations even members of the emperor’s class, becomes suspect and vulnerable. Page duBois makes a similar argument about the use of torture in classical Greece,⁹⁰ and it seems safe to make the observation as a rule for European societies.

Judicial torture reappeared in the twentieth century in wars of colonization and decolonization where race, religion, and culture were factors in the judicial setting. Henri Alleg recalled one of his torturers in Algeria boasting that “[w]e fought the war in Indochina—that was enough to know your type. This is the Gestapo here! You know the Gestapo?”⁹¹ Page duBois notes that “[t]he Gestapo taught the French, who taught the Americans in Indo-China, and they passed on some of their expertise to the Argentinean, Chilean, Salvadoran torturers.”⁹² Jennifer Harbury, in *Truth, Torture, and the American Way*, details CIA-sponsored practices in Latin America and connects them to the current war.⁹³

After World War II, the United Nations addressed the problem of torture in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the Third Geneva Convention of 1949. Separate states, notably the United States, adopted human rights legislation in the next two decades, and organizations such as the International Red Cross and Amnesty International devoted themselves to the cause. Revelations of the practice of torture in Algeria, Greece, Costa Rica, Soviet-bloc countries, and elsewhere in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s produced UN resolutions on torture in 1975 and 1976. The UN Convention Against Torture, adopted by the General Assembly in 1984 and presented for signing in 1985 (ratified by the United States in 1994), followed this forty-year effort.⁹⁴ Article 1 of the Convention defines *torture* as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain

or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”⁹⁵ Article 2 rules out all “exceptional circumstances whatever, whether a state of war or threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency,”⁹⁶ and Article 3 prohibits “extradition of a person to a state where torture may be practiced.”⁹⁷ Article 16 instructs each member state to “undertake to prevent in any territory under its jurisdiction other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment which do not amount to torture as defined in Article 1.”⁹⁸ The UN Convention thus goes beyond judicial torture in two ways: it applies to acts of cruelty outside the technical definition of torture, and it applies to methods of punishment as well as methods of interrogation.

The relevance of this history to current U.S. policy becomes clear in a set of memos written by the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel between the fall of 2001 and December 2004. These memos discuss interrogation techniques in the light of international convention and U.S. law. Phrases from two of the memos (“new paradigm”; “illegal combatants”; “organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death”) are familiar now; several memos have been reprinted, and several can be found as scanned electronic facsimiles on the Internet.⁹⁹ Two things are important about the memos: first, they justify practices consistent with late-medieval and early-modern definitions of torture in the prosecution of religious and political crimes; and second, they make no reference to these precedents, and they refuse to identify the practices as torture. For U.S. policy, the limits described by the three physical conditions listed above (“organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death”) are a threshold for the definition of torture; anything short of these effects does not amount to torture and is therefore permissible. For ancient and medieval legal definitions, the same limits are a ceiling. Torment short of these effects is precisely what judicial torture is; torment exceeding them is barbarity.

The memo writers’ dilemma—how to offer legal sanction for a clearly defined and historically recognizable practice while claiming adherence to international resolutions expressing abhorrence for it—forces them into strange contortions. One memo (December 2001) argues that the jurisdiction of U.S. courts does not apply to Guantanamo, and to the investigation of interrogations there, because Guantanamo lies outside U.S. territory.¹⁰⁰ Without acknowledging this opinion, another memo from the same office (March 2003) argues that the 1984 UN Convention and the 1994 U.S. law ratifying it (2340–2340A) do not apply to Guantanamo because Guantanamo lies *within* U.S. territory.¹⁰¹ Another memo (January 2002) argues that Afghanistan is outside the protection of the 1984 UN Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Conventions, and international laws of war.¹⁰² Another (late January 2002) argues similarly that al-Qaeda, “as a non-State actor,” and the Taliban, as agent of “a failed state” are beyond UN conventions and international law.¹⁰³ Another (also late January 2002), by White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales, explains that “the war against terrorism is a new kind of war” that requires “the ability to quickly obtain information from captured terrorists and their sponsors in order to avoid further atrocities against American civilians, and the need to try terrorists for war crimes such as wantonly killing

civilians. In my judgment, *this new paradigm* renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners..." (my emphasis).¹⁰⁴ Gonzales argues that the Third Geneva Convention does not apply to al-Qaeda at all because it is stateless; it would apply to the Taliban if it were a legitimate state and, therefore, its members legal combatants, but Taliban prisoners are illegal combatants and therefore detainees, not POWs.¹⁰⁵ This early group of memos exploits a weakness in the UN Convention Against Torture, which limits its application to member states, but they go further as well, arguing that persons belonging to rogue states are themselves rogues who have forfeited membership in the human community as well as in the community of nations.

A second group of memos deals with the physical definition of torture and with conditions justifying the suspension of national and international law. The best known of these is a fifty-page memo written for Gonzales by Jay Bybee (August 2002), which clarifies an earlier statement endorsing the UN ban on the infliction of severe pain and suffering. The Bybee memo limits the definition of "severe pain" to "the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death."¹⁰⁶ It holds that legal precedents (in British interrogations of IRA suspects, using techniques like those later discovered at Abu Ghraib) "were cruel and inhuman but did not amount to torture";¹⁰⁷ and it endorses similar techniques that fall into the category of "cruel, inhuman, or degrading" treatment under Article 16 of the UN Convention, on the ground that Article 16 does not proscribe such treatment but only urges member states to avoid it.¹⁰⁸

The same memo argues that culpability requires proof of intent; that is (drawing on the medieval distinction between judicial torture and punitive torment), an agent is not guilty of torture if his object was to gain information rather than to inflict pain. The memo goes further, however, requiring the test of specific rather than merely general intent: "the infliction of such pain must be the defendant's precise objective" (i.e., as opposed to the gathering of information as precise objective);¹⁰⁹ however, if the defendant "acted knowing that severe pain or suffering was reasonably likely to result from his actions, but no more, he would only have acted with general intent.... Further, a showing that an individual acted with a good faith belief that his conduct would not produce the result that the law prohibits negates specific intent.... A good faith belief need not be a reasonable one."¹¹⁰

The same August 2002 memo also outlines the necessity (imminent-threat, ticking-time-bomb) defense, which dates from ancient Greece but was particularly necessary to the late-medieval Inquisition. The lines of the argument are familiar, and Bybee's discussion begins with the proverbial kill-one-person-to-save-two-others case.¹¹¹ Another familiar illustration, often invoked by TV news panelists, is the nuclear-bomb-in-a-suitcase-somewhere-in-New-York scenario: would it be right to torture the person who knows where the bomb is in order to save the city? (As Harbury points out, however, all such cases are either proverbial or hypothetical, and in such a case no special legal protection would be necessary; if the sequence of events should ever occur, no prosecutor anywhere would bring an indictment.)¹¹²

The discussion of "imminent threat" is particularly important for the administration doctrine of preemptive war: "It would be a mistake...to equate

imminence necessarily with timing—that an attack is immediately about to occur. Rather, as the Model Penal Code explains, what is essential is that the defensive *response* must be ‘immediately necessary.’”¹¹³ Further, if “intelligence and other information support the conclusion that an attack is increasingly certain, then the necessity for the interrogation will be reasonable. . . . Finally, the fact that previous al-Qaeda attacks have had as their aim the deaths of American citizens, and that evidence of other plots have had a similar goal in mind, would justify proportionality of interrogation methods designed to elicit information to prevent such deaths.”¹¹⁴ This passage resonates with several other things in the memo and with administration policy generally. The separation of imminence from both clock time and calendar time gives *carte blanche* to the doctrine of pre-emption, and it does so in a way that eliminates the need for a close association of concrete events and therefore places the rationale for war entirely in the administration’s interpretation of events.

The third major concern of the August 2002 memo is the doctrine of executive privilege, specifically the president’s power as commander-in-chief, which the memo argues is absolute: “Any effort to apply Section 2340A in a manner that interferes with the President’s direction of such core war matters as the detention and interrogation of enemy combatants thus would be unconstitutional.”¹¹⁵ This doctrine is put even more forcefully in a later, fifty-four page memo from Gonzales (March 2003, just before the invasion): “the President enjoys complete discretion in the exercise of his Commander-in-Chief authority. . . . In light of the President’s complete authority over the conduct of war, without a clear statement otherwise, [United States] *criminal statutes are not read as infringing on the President’s ultimate authority in these areas.*”¹¹⁶ In addition, “customary international law cannot bind the Executive Branch under the Constitution, because it is not a federal law.”¹¹⁷ The memo also dismisses potential appeals under the eighth amendment (cruel and unusual punishment), on the basis that al-Qaeda detainees have not been convicted of crimes, and under the fifth and fourteenth amendments (self-incrimination; due process), on the basis that the greater good requires the abridgment of these rights.¹¹⁸

The March 2003 memo is a clear statement of the imperial presidency; it resembles the thirteenth-century decree of Pope Alexander IV overriding all opposing secular law and the Tudor policy that torture, or anything else, can be carried out not under the law but above it. The procedural difference is that the Bush administration’s policy implies a blanket warrant, where Tudor policy required a documentary torture warrant, either naming a specific suspect or granting general license to a specific official. Alan Dershowitz has recently called for the administration to issue torture warrants on the ground that, “If we are to have torture, it should be authorized by the law”;¹¹⁹ but Dershowitz misses the point of the Bush administration’s rationale. Elizabeth Holtzman has pointed out that even granting the administration’s reasoning with respect to the UN Convention and U.S. Sections 2340–2340A, administration officials are liable to prosecution under the U.S. War Crimes Act of 1996.¹²⁰ Holtzman too misses the point of the administration’s rationale: under the principle articulated in this memo, the law is of no consequence to the president acting in his capacity as commander-in-chief.

This series of memos constitutes U.S. policy with respect to torture, but it sets the tone for U.S. military actions in general (including the “extraordinary

rendition” of suspects, for the purpose of torture, to third countries and to secret U.S. prison camps in some of those countries),¹²¹ and therefore, in the current political context, for foreign policy in general, and also for domestic policy (e.g., in the authorization of warrantless NSA surveillance). Subsequent efforts to limit the scope of the memos have been welcomed by liberal commentators, but none of them makes the slightest difference. One last Justice Department memo (December 2004), generally acclaimed as a backtracking on the issue of torture on the eve of Gonzales’s confirmation hearing as attorney general, does “disagree with” the “organ failure” definition of torture,¹²² but it offers no replacement definition; it reaffirms the “specific intent” test,¹²³ and it asserts categorically, months after the Abu Ghraib revelations, that the United States does not engage in torture.¹²⁴ In a tellingly cynical touch, the second required report by the United States to the UN on implementation of the Convention Against Torture (due 1999, submitted 2005) cites both this memo and the USA PATRIOT Act as evidence of the nation’s safeguarding of civil liberties.¹²⁵

Similarly, the Senate anti-torture vote in October 2005 (the McCain amendment) effectively prevents enforcement of the anti-torture provision by prohibiting suits by detainees; it permits tortured information to be used in military tribunals (in contrast to medieval law); and it fails to prevent review boards from using coerced information in deciding whether or not to classify a detainee as an “enemy combatant.”¹²⁶ Even so, the bill was met by a signing statement conveying the president’s interpretation of the new law as a gnat on the brow of executive privilege: “The executive branch shall construe [the law] in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the President . . . as Commander in Chief,” which “will assist in achieving the shared objective of the Congress and the President . . . of protecting the American people from further terrorist attacks.”¹²⁷ A presidential signing statement has no direct legal force but is designed for use by courts as an executive branch counterweight to statements made during congressional debate on proposed legislation and preserved in *The Congressional Record*. (The stratagem was devised during the Reagan administration by the deputy assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Counsel, Samuel A. Alito.)¹²⁸

With respect to executive privilege, it is not unusual to suspend the rights of citizens in time of war. Roosevelt and the Congress did so in World War II, most notably in the confinement of Japanese Americans. Nor is it unusual to invoke the commander in chief clause, or simply to arrogate power to the president, in times of war. Wilson did it during World War I, and Lincoln did it during the Civil War, simply ignoring the objections of the Supreme Court. In the present case, Congress gave prior blanket authorization for international actions and also, through the USA PATRIOT Act, authorized the suspension of domestic civil liberties. What is unprecedented is the president’s assertion of unlimited power to fight a stateless and hazily defined global enemy (“this new paradigm”) for a period that he describes as indefinite or even perpetual. (This echoes precisely the late-medieval Inquisition.) Politically, of course, the new enemy is simply a post-Cold War replacement for the international communist conspiracy, but the executive branch assertion is more aggressive in the present case. The claim of exemption from U.S. law, and in effect from all but one clause of the Constitution, coupled with the claim of exemption from international law

and UN conventions, asserts not the United States but the office and person of its president as an international sovereign answerable to no one. The assertion of absolute power blurs the distinction between the office and the person and raises questions about the road back to constitutional government if and when circumstances change.¹²⁹ And it could be argued that a selective state of exception, in which the rights of certain groups are abridged or suspended (Blacks, Indians, the poor), has been the norm in this country, even in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The philosophical groundwork for the Bush administration's policy is provided by the Project for a New American Century, a think-tank founded by Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld in 1997. Other PNAC members have included Paul Wolfowitz (former deputy secretary of defense, now World Bank president), Richard Perle (Reagan's assistant secretary of defense, Bush's chair of the Defense Policy Board from 2001 to 2003), and Richard Armitage (Bush's deputy secretary of state). PNAC's manifesto is *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, published in 2000.¹³⁰ It advocates control of land, sea, air, and space by the United States; the document has become notorious for appearing to hope, not long before 9/11, for "some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor"¹³¹ that would provide an impetus for the rebuilding necessary to accomplish PNAC's ends. A clearer indication of the document's focus, but one that has received less attention, is that it describes the state of the world at the turn of the millennium as "[t]he American peace," and, later in the same paragraph, in case the meaning was unclear, as "a global *Pax Americana*."¹³² It is in order to preserve the *Pax Americana* that we must rebuild the military, enabling it, among other things, to "fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theater wars" and "perform the 'constabulary' duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions,"¹³³ and at the same time control space for both military and economic reasons. The argument whether the real purpose of American expansion is military (Chalmers Johnson) or economic (John Perkins) is pointless; the goals are so harmonious that it is impossible to say which one motivates a particular action.¹³⁴ Dick Cheney's involvement with Halliburton and Richard Perle's with the Trireme Group (a war procurement and consulting services corporation that, like Halliburton, is involved in the rebuilding of Iraq) are not evidence of a compromised political purpose but proof of its integrity.

In a decade when *Guantanamo Guidebook* makes sense, it is fitting that a spokesman for the national purpose should be General William F. (Gerry) Boykin, whose interpretation of the war effort appears as an epigram to this essay. As a member of Delta Force, Boykin was in Latin America during the 1970s, and evidence suggests his involvement in the assassination of Pablo Escobar in Colombia.¹³⁵ He was the combat commander in Mogadishu during the 1993 episode dramatized in *Black Hawk Down*. He went to Iraq in 2003 as assistant to Stephen Cambone, undersecretary of defense for Intelligence, whose mission was to develop a Special Forces approach to finding and eliminating al-Qaeda leaders—the same approach that had failed in Vietnam.¹³⁶ Boykin assisted Cambone in the ferreting out of al-Qaeda leaders, a mission that made the interrogation of detainees a matter of crucial importance.¹³⁷ Boykin's involvement also apparently extends to Afghanistan; three Americans sentenced to prison by an Afghan court for operating a secret prison testified that they were under Boykin's orders.¹³⁸

Boykin's analysis of the conflict and of his job was clear from his speech in June 2003 to a church group in Oregon, in which he said the enemy hates the United States "because we're a Christian nation, because our foundation and our roots are Judeo-Christian . . . and the enemy is a guy named Satan."¹³⁹ Boykin has also said that Bush is "in the White House because God put him there."¹⁴⁰

Boykin has been dismissed in both mainstream and dissident media as either a buffoon or a trial balloon for administration attitudes—a Bush-era Spiro Agnew—but his resumé is also the track record of Nixon–Ford–Carter–Bush–Clinton–Bush policy in global flashpoints, and the current administration has declined to repudiate his interpretation of the current global conflict. In September 2001, George Bush spoke of "this crusade, this war on terrorism" and promised to "rid the world of the evil-doers."¹⁴¹ The slip was so embarrassing, and the press so diffident, that it received little serious attention, but Bush and Boykin are in agreement. The historical record offers only this correction: that U.S. policy in the current global war on the whole has been an Inquisition rather than a Crusade.

The history of judicial torture shows that when church or state develops imperial ambitions, citizenship at home becomes a slippery concept. The expansion of empire magnifies the threats to empire, both real and imagined, and imperial paranoia always has two effects domestically: it exposes and deepens concealed rifts between classes, and it exerts increasing pressure on the ruling classes. Eventually it nullifies all distinctions except the one between the ruling oligarchy and everyone else, and in the end not even that distinction is safe.

The UN Security Council imposed economic sanctions on Iraq in 1990, following its invasion of Kuwait. Those sanctions were left in place after the first Gulf War in 1991, ostensibly as pressure toward disarmament, and for thirteen years the United States and United Kingdom (by threat of veto) rejected any attempt to lift them.¹⁴² A Security Council resolution of May 2003, after the Bush invasion, gave control of Iraq to the United States and United Kingdom and at the same time lifted the sanctions to permit reconstruction efforts, which have been assigned mainly to U.S. and U.K. contractors (including Dick Cheney's Halliburton and Richard Perle's Trireme Group). According to the Chicago-based human rights group Voices in the Wilderness, 500,000 Iraqi children under five died of malnutrition while the sanctions were in force, and 300,000 more are severely malnourished at present. In 2002, Voices in the Wilderness was fined \$20,000 by the U.S. Treasury for symbolic violations of the sanctions against Iraq (bringing medical supplies into the country); the fine was upheld by a federal district court in August 2005.¹⁴³

On a national scale, the invasion was acute torture and the sanctions were torture by deprivation. Their goal was to extort from Iraq, in the person of Saddam Hussein, a confession of heretical practices and designs (the development of immoral weapons, the ambition to power in the area) against the orthodox community of nations led by the United States, and to exact a satisfactory penance (from Saddam, humiliation, abdication, and death, and from his country the confiscation not precisely of its corporate wealth but of the right to control it). The line between judicial torture and punitive torment has always been hazy, partly because the inquisitor's intent is unprovable but more importantly because the application of torture always requires the presumption of guilt. (The bomb-in-a-suitcase-in-New-York scenario always posits a *terrorist* who *knows* where

the bomb is, not a person who may or may not be a terrorist and may or may not have any information of value.) The line has been particularly hazy during the current war, because the presumption has been that any unknown Arab or Muslim is guilty. On the scale of starving a country's children, the line disappears completely.

Our behavior toward the countries and cultures we think of as medieval can be read as the violent ambivalence of the Orientalist, and it is significant that to a high degree these "medieval" cultures are also the ones "East of Suez," in Kipling's phrase ("The Road to Mandalay"). In 2002, after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and before the country's attention and troops were diverted to Iraq, there was a flurry of network news feature segments on the rebuilding effort. For the most part these were Orientalist fantasies of the bright future awaiting the people of Afghanistan, now that we had freed them from the medieval tyranny of the Taliban. One such segment focused on the burgeoning cottage industry in beauty shops, which it took as a symbol of cultural freedom, women's liberation, and free enterprise. The difficulties in Iraq have limited the movements of American correspondents there, but with our support, Iraq is emerging from the medieval nightmare of the Ba'athists. In the summer of 2005, Iraqi TV offered a reality show called *Congratulations*, a *cinema vérité* look at the wedding preparations of young Baghdad couples, with costs paid by the show's sponsors. *Congratulations* is a showpiece of the new Iraq; according to The Voice of America, the network producing the show is "Iraq's first independent satellite television broadcaster" and "it is staking its future on soap operas, music videos and reality TV. Producers have no hard figures, but they estimate that millions of people across the region watch the seven weekly episodes leading up to each wedding they organize."¹⁴⁴

The show is a morality play of the triumph of Western values. There is a suspenseful moment in one episode as the camera van, stuck in traffic, is separated from the furniture delivery truck it is following. When the van finally arrives at the bride's house, her mother opens the door to say, "'God saved us today. We saw a huge explosion.' She then explains how a car-bomb detonated nearby sent shrapnel falling onto the house."¹⁴⁵ The Voice of America, perhaps surprisingly, mentions "a US occupation force" as one of the dangers of life in Baghdad, but it concludes, "With Iraq's insurgency showing no signs of letting up, viewers across the region know that Hussam and Asmaa are setting off on what may be an uncertain future. But thanks to a TV program, more of them can see exactly what Iraq's reality actually means."¹⁴⁶ The furniture arrived late but intact.

Notes

1. *Pulp Fiction*, VHS, directed by Quentin Tarantino (1994; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 1995).
2. See, for example, Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Warlords and Drug Lords," *NewsMax.com*, 10 July 2003, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/7/9/182138.shtml>.
3. This idea blossomed into full-length cinema in Richard Donner's time travel film, *Timeline* (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2003), based on Michael Crichton's novel of the same name (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), whose medieval setting is northern France, 1357, the day of an English invasion. *Timeline* depicts the twenty-first century as a cannibalistic technological nightmare but

nonetheless a better place than the alternative. Shortly after arriving in the fourteenth century, one young character says, "There's one thing worse than dying here, and that's living here."

4. Dick Meyer, "War Images: Beholders' Eyes Matter," *CBS News.com*, 21 May 2004, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/21/opinion/meyer/main/618966.shtml>, and Nile Gardiner, "New Versus Old Europe: The Growing Coalition against Saddam," *Open Democracy.net*, 31 January 2003, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-2-88-936.jsp>.
5. See, for example, Aparisim Ghosh, "Iron Maiden Found in Uday Hussein's Playground," *Time.com*, 19 April 2003, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,444889,00.html>.
6. "The four programmes in the Torture series demonstrate the wide reach of the United States in its war on terror" ("Torture Cases," <http://www.channel4.com/news/microsites/T/torture/cases.html>). In response to my request, a Channel 4 spokesman said that no tapes or transcripts of any of the shows were available.
7. Jeremy Bransten, "UK: 'Guantanamo Guidebook' TV Show Stirs Controversy," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.org*, 10 February 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/02/97c5d096-0398-4a76-b770-e35b08de5728.html>.
8. Shelley Emling, "Program Twists Torture into TV," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 27 February 2005: A3.
9. See Team Delta's homepage, *Team Delta: Authentic Military Experiences*, at <http://www.teamdelta.net>.
10. "Torture: Guantanamo Guidebook: Links to Coverage and an Article by 'Prisoner 73' on his Experience," *Team Delta.net*, <http://www.teamdelta.net/GuantanamoGuidebook.htm>.
11. "Torture: Guantanamo Guidebook: Links to Coverage."
12. Accounts are beginning to emerge from the current war. One victim of extraordinary rendition, Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen of Syrian extraction, was arrested by U.S. agents at Kennedy Airport in September 2002 and flown to Italy, Jordan, and Syria, where he was tortured before finally being released without charge. As is often the case with torture victims, Arar has been unable to speak in public about the details of his treatment. See "Maher Arar Fights to Keep Torture Suit against U.S. Government Alive," *Democracy Now!.org*, 10 August 2005, <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/08/10/1346251>. A chronology of Arar's case can be found at "Maher Arar: Timeline," *CBC News*, 3 December 2004 (updated 26 January 2007), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/arar>. In a *Guardian* interview with Huda Alazawi, one of the few women held in maximum security by the United States at Abu Ghraib, Alazawi reports that during an eight-month detention she was at various times blindfolded, exposed to prolonged cold and loud noise, drenched in cold water, denied food, confined in a cell one meter on a side (a modern version of the *mala mansio*), beaten, and forced to watch the torture of her brother, who died from his beatings and whose body was thrown into a cell with Alazawi and their sister, also a captive. Alazawi says little about the long-term effects of her captivity except that her husband divorced her and she is now "trying to put her life back together" ("After Abu Ghraib," *The Guardian*, 29 September 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1308346,00.html>).
13. The photographs are still in wide circulation on the Internet, and several are reprinted in Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror* (New York: New York Review Books, 2004), Appendix II, pp. 217–24.
14. Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 May 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/23PRISONS.html>.

15. Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others."
16. Quoted in Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others."
17. See Jane Mayer, "The Experiment," *The New Yorker*, 11/28 July 2005: 63, 67, 68, and 70 [60–71].
18. Mayer, "The Experiment," p. 64.
19. Henri Alleg, *The Question* (New York: George Braziller, 1958). This is the American edition of Alleg's *La Question* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1958), which at the time was banned in France, circulated underground in that country, and smuggled abroad. Its translator is unidentified but is likely to have been Braziller.
20. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Introduction," in Alleg, *The Question*, pp. 30–31.
21. See Alfred McCoy, *A Question of Torture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), pp. 8–9.
22. Scanned facsimiles of both *KUBARK, The Coercive Counterintelligence Interrogation of Resistant Sources* and *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual–1983* are available at the National Security Archive website, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122>.
23. Gary Cohn, Ginger Thompson, and Mark Matthews, "Torture as Taught by CIA; Declassified Manual Details the Methods Used in Honduras; Agency Denials Refuted," *The Baltimore Sun*, 27 January 1997; a reprint of this article is available at <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/40/055.html>.
24. *KUBARK*, p. 94.
25. *KUBARK*, p. 82.
26. *KUBARK*, p. 87.
27. *KUBARK*, p. 84.
28. Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), p. 39.
29. Hersh, *Chain of Command*, pp. 30–32.
30. Quoted in McCoy, *A Question of Terror*, p. 153.
31. Jane Mayer, "A Deadly Interrogation," *The New Yorker.com*, 7 November 2005, http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/051114fa_fact.
32. "The Vice President Appears on Meet the Press with Tim Russert," 16 September 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/vicepresident/news-speeches/speeches/vp20010916.html>.
33. Hersh, *Chain of Command*, pp. 23–26.
34. C.C. Simmons, "Prisoner Abuse: From Texas to Baghdad: Former Texas Prison Chief Played Key Role at Abu Ghraib," *The Touchstone* 14.3 (September/October 2004), <http://www.rtis.com/touchstone/oct2004/06.html>.
35. Simmons, "Prisoner Abuse."
36. Simmons, "Prisoner Abuse."
37. Quoted in Simmons, "Prisoner Abuse."
38. Danner, *Torture and Truth*, p. 4.
39. Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (1974; repr. New York: Harper, 1983). Milgram's volunteer subjects were told they were participating in a study of the effects of negative reinforcement on learning (pp. 3–4). The arms of the "learner" were strapped to the arms of his chair; when he gave an incorrect answer to a word-matching question, the subject was to use a control panel to administer what he thought were electric shocks of increasing intensity from 30 to 450 volts. The "learner" was a paid actor who simulated physical distress, from verbal protests to demands for release to agonized screams. Subjects who expressed moral reservations were told by the supervisor (an actor in a lab coat playing the role of professor) that the experiment must continue; most subjects continued to the end (p. 5).

40. Edward Peters, *Torture*, exp. edn. (1985; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 111; Samuel Walker, *Popular Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 61–63 and 70.
41. Center on Wrongful Convictions, Northwestern University School of Law, “The Illinois Exonerated: Leroy Orange,” http://www.law.northwestern.edu/depts/clinic/wrongful/exonerations/IL_Orange.htm.
42. Center on Wrongful Convictions, “The Illinois Exonerated: Leroy Orange.”
43. Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 135.
44. Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 179.
45. Jim Hightower, *Thieves in High Places: They’ve Stolen Our Country and It’s Time to Take It Back* (New York: Viking, 2003), p. 14.
46. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. and trans. John Henry Freese (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1926), pp. 162–63.
47. On the medieval transition to evidentiary proceedings, see, for example Peters, *Torture*, pp. 41–48; John H. Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 4–8; Henry Charles Lea, *Torture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973), pp. 53–59; and Peters, “Introduction,” in Lea, *Torture*, pp. ix–x. These commentators note that torture, as a device of trial by evidence, in theory reflects a commitment to rational processes, as opposed to the irrational proofs of oath and ordeal.
48. Peters, *Torture*, p. 6.
49. Peters, Introduction to Lea, *Torture*, pp. xvi–xvii.
50. Lea, *Torture*, p. 73.
51. Lea, *Torture*, p. 74.
52. Peters, *Torture*, p. 49.
53. Henry Charles Lea, *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (1887; repr. New York: Citadel Press, 1963), p. 123; Lea, *Torture*, p. 37.
54. Lea, *Torture*, p. 106.
55. Lea, *Torture*, p. 106.
56. Reprinted in Lea, *Torture*, Appendix, p. 188.
57. Peters, “Introduction,” p. xv.
58. Peters, *Torture*, p. 50.
59. Lea, *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, pp. 155 and 233–34; Heath, *Torture and English Law*, pp. 28–29.
60. Lea, *Torture*, Appendix, p. 188.
61. Lea, *Inquisition*, p. 31.
62. Lea, *Torture*, p. 59.
63. Lea, *Inquisition*, p. 123.
64. Lea, *Inquisition*, p. 45.
65. Lea, *Torture*, p. 126.
66. Quoted in Lea, *Inquisition*, p. 231.
67. James Heath, *Torture and English Law: An Administrative and Legal History from the Plantagenets to the Stuarts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 39.
68. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror*, p. 43.
69. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 32.
70. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, pp. 35–36.
71. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 36; Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror*, p. 44.
72. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, pp. 45–46.
73. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, pp. 52 and 57–58.
74. Lea, *Torture*, pp. 140–41; Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 59.

75. Lea, *Torture*, p. 141.
76. Quoted in Lea, *Torture*, p. 141.
77. Lea, *Torture*, p. 141.
78. Quoted in Lea, *Torture*, p. 141.
79. Lea, *Torture*, p. 141.
80. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, pp. 74–76.
81. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 83.
82. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 90.
83. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 109.
84. Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Truth*, pp. 94–122, lists all extant torture warrants in a table giving the date, the suspect, the venue, the officiating officer, the offense, and the mode of torture.
85. G[eoffrey] R[udolph] Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge, UK: The University Press, 1962), pp. 412–13.
86. Lea, *Torture*, p. 143.
87. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 176.
88. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 167.
89. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 11.
90. Page duBois, *Torture and Truth* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 42.
91. Alleg, *The Question*, p. 58.
92. duBois, *Torture and Truth*, p. 5.
93. Jennifer K. Harbury, “From the Latin American Torture Cells,” in Jennifer K. Harbury, *Truth, Torture, and the American Way: The History and Consequences of US Involvement in Torture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), pp. 56–104.
94. A summary of postwar events appears in Peters, *Torture*, pp. 155–61 and 176–78. Another summary, with additional details, appears in European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), “European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment of Punishment: Historical background and main features of the Convention,” *Council of Europe.int*, <http://www.cpt.coe.int/en/documents/historical-background.htm>.
95. “United Nations Convention against Torture,” Article 1, in Peters, *Torture*, Appendix, pp. 273–74. The entire text of the 1984 Convention is reprinted in Peters, *Torture*, Appendix, pp. 273–88.
96. “United Nations Convention against Torture,” Article 2, in Peters, *Torture*, p. 274.
97. “United Nations Convention against Torture,” Article, 3, in Peters, *Torture*, p. 274.
98. “United Nations Convention against Torture,” Article 16, in Peters, *Torture*, p. 277.
99. Most of the memos, including those leaked to reporters and never released by the White House, are available at the website of the National Security Archive, George Washington University, “The Interrogation Documents: Debating U.S. Policy and Methods,” <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/index.htm> (hereafter referred to as “Interrogation Documents”).
100. Patrick F. Philbin and John C. Yoo, “Memorandum for William J. Haynes, II, General Counsel, Department of Defense; Re: Possible Habeas Jurisdiction over Aliens Held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba,” 28 December 2001, pp. 3, 5, and 6 (in “Interrogation Documents”).
101. “Assessment of Legal, Historical, Policy, and Operational Considerations,” 6 March 2003, pp. 5–6; the full text is transcribed in David G. Savage and Richard B. Schmitt, “Lawyers Ascribed Broad Power to Bush on Torture,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 2004: A16.

102. John Yoo and Robert J. Delahunty, "Memorandum for William J. Haynes II, General Counsel, Department of Defense; Re: Application of Treaties and Laws to al Qaeda and Taliban Detainees," 9 January 2002, p. 1 (in "Interrogation Documents").
103. "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales, Counsel to the President and William J. Haynes II, General Counsel of the Department of Defense; Re: Application of Treaties and Laws to al Qaeda and Taliban Detainees," 22 January 2002, pp. 1–2; (in "Interrogation Documents").
104. Alberto R. Gonzales, "Memorandum for the President; Re: Decision Re: Application of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War to the Conflict with al Qaeda and the Taliban," 25 January 2002, p. 2 (in "Interrogation Documents").
105. Gonzales, "Memorandum for the President," 25 January 2002, pp. 1 and 3.
106. Jay Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales, Counsel to the President; Re: Standards of Conduct for Interrogation under 18 USC. §§ 2340–2340A," 1 August 2002, p. 1 (in "Interrogation Documents").
107. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," pp. 28–29.
108. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," p. 15.
109. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," p. 3.
110. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," pp. 3–4.
111. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," p. 40.
112. Harbury, *Truth, Torture, and the American Way*, p. 167.
113. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," p. 43.
114. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," p. 44.
115. Bybee, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales," p. 31.
116. Alberto Gonzalez, "Assessment of Legal, Historical, Policy, and Operational Considerations," 6 March 2003, p. 22 (in "Interrogation Documents"); emphasis mine.
117. Gonzalez, "Assessment of Legal, Historical, Policy, and Operational Considerations," p. 5.
118. Gonzalez, "Assessment of Legal, Historical, Policy, and Operational Considerations," p. 38.
119. Alan Dershowitz, quoted in D. Lindley Young, "Above the Law or Outside It," *The Modern Tribune*, 10 January 2005, http://www.themodertribune.com/gonzalez_bush_u_s_policy_on_torture.htm.
120. Elizabeth Holtzman, "Torture and Accountability," *The Nation*, 18/25 July 2005: 23 [20–24].
121. See Jane Mayer, "Outsourcing Torture," *The New Yorker*, 14 February 2005: 8.
122. Daniel Levin, "Memorandum for James B. Comey, Deputy Attorney General; Re: Legal Standards Applicable Under 18 USC. §§ 2340–2340A," 30 December 2004, p. 2 (in "Interrogation Documents").
123. Levin, "Memorandum for James B. Comey," p. 17.
124. Levin, "Memorandum for James B. Comey," p. 16.
125. United Nations, Convention Against Torture (CAT), "Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 19 of the Convention: Second Periodic Reports of States Parties Due in 1999: Addendum: United States of America," 6 May 2005 (revised 13 January 2006), pp. 5 and 64; a copy of this report is available through the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' on-line "Treaty Body Database," under "CAT—Committee Against Torture," located at <http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/>.
126. Joanne Mariner, "The Loopholes in McCain's Bill," *Counterpunch.org*, 23 December 2005, <http://www.counterpunch.org/mariner12232005.html>.

127. Charlie Savage, "Bush Could Bypass New Torture Ban," *Boston Globe*, 4 January 2006; a reprint of this article is available at *Common Dreams News Center*, <http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/headlines06/0104-02.htm>.
128. See Christopher Lee, "Alito Once Made Case for Presidential Power," *The Washington Post*, 2 January 2006; a reprint of this article is available at *Michael Moore.com*, <http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/print.php?id=5353>.
129. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 87. By contrast Michael Ignatieff, in *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), takes what he calls "a middle course" between civil libertarian and pragmatic viewpoints: "I take the position that exceptions do not destroy the rule but save it, provided that they are temporary, publicly justified, and deployed only as a last resort" (p. viii). Ignatieff's book is adapted from a series of lectures given in Edinburgh. It is useful in laying out some of the practical ethical issues involved, but it does not attempt a rigorous analysis; it never clearly explains these three conditions, all of which are problematic. It introduces the red herrings of weapons of mass destruction and imminent threat, and it accepts the assumption that 9/11 self-evidently justified a "selective" state of exception (in which the rights of Arabs and Muslims were abridged), while at the same time rejecting the effect of that action (the detention of 5,000 people without cause or due process) (p. 26). The gap opened by this position goes unrecognized, and Ignatieff's call for the ethical application of emergency measures fails to resolve the matter. (When does a terrorist attack justify the suspension of rights? Why didn't the Oklahoma City bombing, which destroyed a federal facility, lead to a state of exception with respect to suspected members of white militant groups or enrolled members of the National Rifle Association?).
130. The Project for a New American Century (PNAC), *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, September 2000, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>.
131. PNAC, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, p. 51.
132. PNAC, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, p. 1.
133. PNAC, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, p. iv.
134. Chalmers A. Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), and John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004). For years Perkins worked as a CIA-front man for an international consulting firm, Charles T. Main, Inc. (p. 9). His book details his involvement, and the CIA's involvement, in U.S. subversion of governments in Panama, Ecuador, and Columbia and elsewhere in Latin America on behalf of U.S. corporate interests.
135. Hersh, *Chain of Command*, p. 278.
136. Hersh, *Chain of Command*, p. 277.
137. Hersh, *Chain of Command*, p. 277.
138. Harbury, *Truth, Torture, and the American Way*, p. 25.
139. Quoted in Richard Cooper, "General Casts War in Religious Terms," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 October 2003; a reprint of this article is available at *Common Dreams News Center*, <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/1016-01.htm>.
140. Quoted in Cooper, "General Casts War in Religious Terms."
141. "Bush Vows to Rid the World of 'Evil-Doers,'" *CNN.com*, 16 September 2001, <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/16/gen.bush.terrorism>.
142. See "Sanctions against Iraq," *Global Policy Forum*, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/sanction/indexone.htm>.

143. See "Judge Orders Fine against U.S. Citizens for Bringing Medicine to Iraq," *Voices in the Wilderness*, 14 August 2005, <http://www.vitw.org/archives/978>.
144. Patricia Nunan, "Iraqi Reality TV Program Trails Young Couples Planning Weddings," *Voice of America*, 5 July 2005, <http://www.voanews.com/english/2005-07-05-voa16.cfm>.
145. Nunan, "Iraqi Reality TV Program."
146. Nunan, "Iraqi Reality TV Program."

CHAPTER 9

WOLVES, OUTLAWS, AND ENEMY COMBATANTS

Michael E. Moore

In 2002 the United States began a policy of imprisoning or transporting terrorism suspects without due process of law, such that anger, fear, and hatred seem to have awakened a kind of legal atavism, causing a reversal of traditional American ideals and an apparent revival of premodern principles. In this essay, a close comparison is made between the extra-judicial category of the enemy combatant and the early medieval practice of banishment or outlawry of the “wolf-outlaw,” in order to suggest that the return of the outlaw concept is a retreat from the highest developments of medieval law, such as the notion of absolute rights and the concept that due process of law has priority over state power and the sovereignty of rulers.

this is the future and we are living it

—John Ash

American Gothic

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*]. The glittering palace and gardens of Sanssouci, where Frederick II wrote chamber music and debated with Voltaire, floated above a society that was still crudely medieval.¹ In the period 2001–06, the United States seemed to do the reverse: it adopted a number of premodern 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*. Primitive 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).

These practices emerged as a response to terrorism, on the principle that terrorists should not be allowed to participate in the legal world: terrorists, it is argued, should be excluded from the law of the United States, from treaties on the law of war, and from international law and custom, including the Geneva Conventions. Viewed from the vantage point of the state, the treatment accorded to terrorists would not be restrained or restricted by legal principles. Viewed from another angle, the terrorist would not have any of the protections and legal

stature that come with being a member of a community. Such a condition is in many ways similar to the early medieval condition of outlawry.

Although the United States currently considers international treaties and norms governing the treatment of prisoners to be an obstruction, it formerly played a leading role in establishing treaties such as the Geneva Conventions. The extent of the change in the American attitude and approach can be seen by comparison with the ideals that were used to craft international norms and standards for the treatment of prisoners in the wake of World War II, partly in response to the unprecedented scale of the use of torture and concentration camps by the Nazis.² In 1959, when the United Nations compiled a survey entitled *Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest, Detention and Exile*, the official reply of the United States to the survey questionnaire breathed an easy sense of assurance about its own high standards, which it could offer as a pattern of good law for the world to admire and follow: "The greatest single threat to the individual's personal security throughout history has been the exercise of government authority arbitrarily to take into custody and indefinitely imprison any person without granting him, as of right, an opportunity to be heard and to have a speedy and impartial public hearing."³ These ideals stemmed in part from the Enlightenment inheritance of the United States and in part from the traditions of English common law, which were the root stock of the American system of law. In departing from these two old systems, one a philosophical approach to ancient political problems, the other an even older body of legal doctrine, it may be conjectured that an announcement is being made of a new identity and a new basic approach to the traditional problems of politics.

What follows is a study of one aspect of this American transfiguration: the exclusion of certain prisoners, classified as enemy combatants, from the legal world and from due process of law. The terrorist, like the medieval outlaw, is sometimes associated with the symbol of the wolf. In the Middle Ages, the image of the wolf was often applied to enemies of the peace of the community, expressing the idea of wolfish delight in criminality. In this essay, a close comparison will be made between the extra-judicial category of the enemy combatant and the early medieval practice of banishment or outlawry of the "wolf-outlaw." Outlawry and excommunication during the Middle Ages appear similar, in many respects, to current legal doctrines of the U.S. government. It is possible to examine the reasoning behind those legal doctrines by study of the formerly secret "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales" (22 January 2002) and the "Working Group Report" (6 March 2003), prepared for then secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld.⁴ Both of these documents were made public against the wishes of the administration. I wish to explore the resonance between these new doctrines and certain mythic and legal concepts of the medieval world, thereby to suggest that the return of the outlaw concept is a retreat from the highest developments of medieval law, such as the notion of absolute rights and the concept that due process of law has priority over state power and the sovereignty of rulers.

The Wolfish Outlaw

During the early Middle Ages, the image of the wolf was frequently associated with the violence of outlaws and their withdrawal from the community. Many

early medieval societies banished dangerous criminals and taboo-breakers from the social and legal world as outlaws. Such criminals were seen as having adopted an inhuman identity: wolf-like beings, ranging far outside the human world, hunted and hiding in the wilderness. In medieval Ireland and Iceland the term *wolf* was applied to any dangerous foreigner who did not belong to the local community.⁵ Wolfishness was also thought to be an attribute of the medieval outlaw, who was deemed to become wolf-like. The outlaw was said to have a “wolf’s head” and anyone could kill him, just as though he were a real wolf.⁶ The symbol of the wolf still carries some of this resonance in modern political life. During the 2004 presidential election, terrorists were visually compared to wolves in a Bush campaign advertisement, thus drawing on an ancient symbol for enemies of the social order and the vividly imagined lycanthropy of savage crimes and departure from the norms of civilized life.

In the Middle Ages, too, the outlaw was a man who had become wolfish, and he was to be treated like a wolf. According to the laws of the Anglo-Saxon king Edward the Confessor (d. 1066), if someone breaks the “peace of the Holy Church” and flees, then the king may outlaw him: “if he is found and can be held alive, he shall be surrendered to the king, or his head [shall be sent to him] if he defends himself. For from the day of his outlawry he bears a wolf’s head, which is called *whuesheued* by the English.”⁷ A bundle of concepts lay embedded in the wolf image. Only the most hated and feared types of criminals were thought of as wolfish. In early medieval Frankish law, it was the grave robber who could be declared a werewolf: a *wargus* or a *uuiridarium*.⁸ *Wargus* appears to be derived from an old Germanic root connected to wolf.⁹ In other early medieval law-codes the term *wargus* was applied to traitors, magicians, or kidnappers. *Wargus* or *uargus* could refer to any robber or vagabond,¹⁰ but it referred especially to a type of criminal to be expelled from the community. At the same time, it seemed that such a man had himself withdrawn from the community with his attacks and crimes and adopted a new identity. It was even thought that these feared and hated categories of men could change their bodily shape, becoming werewolves or shape changers of some other type. It was deemed acceptable and even necessary to treat the criminal as a nonhuman. The possibility of shifting identities was known to Burchard of Worms, who felt that demonic individuals who could transform themselves into the appearance of a woman should be expelled from the parish. Likewise soothsayers were to be “cast out of the city.”¹¹

These criminals, conceived of as demonic creatures outside the boundaries of humanity, were pushed away from society, absolutely excluded from the shelter of the community and its legal world and suffering what amounted to “civil death.”¹² A similar impulse can be seen in recent legal doctrines of the United States, as explained in the arcane and melancholy “Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales.” Here it was argued that detainees captured during the invasion of Afghanistan might have no possible status in any law of the world: Afghanistan itself was termed a “failed state,” and thus anyone fighting against the United States in that country was not fighting for a sovereign state.¹³ The president of the United States, according to the “Memorandum,” could determine that these prisoners did not enjoy the legal status of Prisoners of War, and thus were not “legally entitled to the standards of treatment in common article 3 [of the Geneva Conventions].”¹⁴ This argument was bolstered by reference to

the deliberate crimes of these fighters: “massacres of both prisoners and civilians” and hiding soldiers and equipment in mosques.¹⁵ The crimes and the situation meant that these prisoners had put themselves outside the ordinary realms of law. They were not ordinary prisoners, but rather “enemy combatants.”¹⁶

The outlaw (*exlex* or *utlah* in Anglo-Saxon law) was said to “wear the wolf’s head.” The forest was the proper haunt for such figures, ranging far from the houses and protection of the village.¹⁷ No food or lodging was to be offered to the *utlah*. Although medieval legal texts often speak of the communal assembly as the source of banishment, outlawry could also be declared by the king’s command [*ore suo*].¹⁸ Such a man was held to have withdrawn himself from the orderly world of the community and its code of justice (Anglo-Saxon *riht*). A cry could be raised against him, the “scream” (the Germanic root *skri*) or “hue and cry.”¹⁹ The outcry (Latin *clamor*) was raised at the discovery of a terrible crime, followed by pursuit of the suspected criminal. This was a call to arms [*arma clamare*], summoning the community to kill or capture the fleeing criminal.²⁰ At that point the early medieval outlaw must flee or be hunted down: he was excluded from every hearth and could be hunted like a wolf. The outlaw thus became an exile, if he wished to survive. This hated category of person had been transformed into a demonic being and must not be fed or given shelter.²¹ The nineteenth-century legal historian Nicolo Tamassia offered a haunting depiction of the fate of the outlaw: “the frightening figure of this man outside the law, against whom all the wrath of the *gens* was directed, who prowled the woods like a famished wolf, is the Germanic *faidosus*, the Italian *homo sacer*, whom any man could slay with impunity because there was no longer any bond of kinship to protect him against the furious avengers.”²² *Homo sacer* was the repulsive, untouchable obverse side of community. Such acts of exclusion helped to form the community as a legal subject: the law was made by and for the village or kingdom, at the same time enclosing and defining it. Maurizio Lupoi argues that the concept of outlawry was fundamental to establishing the inner, safe circle of communal law and royal power.²³ The power of the king [*bannum*] was developed specifically to protect a social and spiritual space and to exclude wicked forces.

The nineteenth-century legal historian Rudolf Sohm, like Tamassia, believed that the institution of outlawry was an old and primitive form of law. In the expulsion of an outlaw by the community, as described in the early Frankish law codes, one could see a feature of the most archaic period of Germanic law and institutions.²⁴ The Salian law code itself claims that the law of outlawry is ancient [*antiqua lex*].²⁵ The expulsion or exclusion of outlaws had a character similar to ancient scapegoating and reflects the operation of a binary scheme, as Claude Lévi-Strauss would suggest, in which archaic law tried to distinguish between inside and outside.²⁶ The harshness of the division meant that the realm of law and the human world coincided exactly, and there was little tolerance for ambiguity.

In the history of the Christian church, excommunication was a similar phenomenon. Certain grave, public faults could result in exclusion from Christian society. As Jean Imbert explains, the meaning of excommunication, a flexible concept in the late antique church, was gradually sharpened during the Carolingian period.²⁷ Excommunication or *anathema* meant exclusion from communion, and therefore separation from the Christian community.²⁸ Those who committed

violent and morally repulsive crimes, such as attacking the hospitals of the poor, or seizing the property of the church, could be declared *anathema*. This sentence operated like a curse, with the solemn, public pronouncement of the phrase *Anathema maranatha*. A sentence of *anathema* created an absolute separation from the Church and from God, a “condemnation to eternal death.”²⁹ According to a council held in Rome in 743, *anathema* could strike someone who married a woman who had taken a vow of celibacy or who celebrated the Kalends of January like a pagan. The *anathema* or excommunication was a formal denunciation that had the effect of excluding the guilty person, who was then “separated from the body of Christ.”³⁰

The Council of Ver (755) declared that anyone under the sanction of excommunication should not be allowed to enter a church. The person was not allowed to eat or drink with a Christian. One could not accept presents from such a person, give him the kiss of peace, or pray with him. A Christian who violated these restrictions, and who offered food or drink to someone who had been declared *anathema*, could also be punished with excommunication. Royal law at times extended this punishment with confiscation of goods or exile.³¹ Punishment by excommunication or *anathema* (later thought of as a more severe sentence) was a close parallel to the practice of banishment or outlawry in so many law codes of the early Middle Ages. Like outlawry, excommunication was an attempt to divide the guilty one from the enclosed protections of the legal world of the kingdom or the sanctified world of the Church. Thus the Jews were also frequently *anathematized*, a sentence that makes sense only in terms of a desire to enclose and define the protected world. In ancient Roman law, a similar punishment existed, in the “denial of water and fire” [*interdictio aquae et ignis*].³²

Binding the Wolf

Medieval outlawry is the subject of considerable scholarly literature, much of it concerned with the mythological and archaic elements that emerged in early law. The outlaw-as-wolf was connected to ancient mythic or folkloric concepts revolving around the wolf. In various mythologies of antiquity, according to Georges Dumézil, the wolf was considered an evil creature, symbolizing “whatever is hostile and foreign,” including outlaws.³³ Though the mythic dimension appears to be missing in modern outlawry (modern political leaders do not believe in werewolves), there is a connection in the favoring of prophylaxis over law.

There was a dialectical relation between the barbaric wolf and the origins of civilization. According to the legend recorded by Livy, Romulus and Remus were abandoned as infants in the wilderness that formerly existed along the ancient Tiber. Then, says Livy, a wolf came out of the mountains and bent over the infants, offering her teats to them and allowing them to survive.³⁴ Thus the primeval image of the wolf has a role to play in the founding of Rome. Roman culture was thus mythically initiated in a series of crimes: the ancestral theft of land, arbitrary wars, the rape of the Sabine women. This she-wolf, the *lupa romana*, became a common symbol of the Roman state and culture and was later adopted by those who would claim the mantle of Roman rule, such as the Emperor Charlemagne.³⁵ The wolf image was therefore an image of the

primitive and violent origins of society. The element of disorder was retained in the association of the wolf with Zeus, who had a "wolf-hypostasis" (*Zeus Lykaïos*), and with the fertility rites of the *lupercalia*, in which sodalities of young men struck the women of Rome with leather straps.³⁶

In Norse mythology, likewise, the primordial wolf Fenrir was bound in chains, thus allowing the establishment of cosmic order. But in order to convince the powerful wolf to be bound, one of the gods, Tyr, placed his hand in the wolf's mouth as a pledge of faith.³⁷ He lost his hand as a result, and Tyr is therefore the god of law and the god of the council: he oversaw public assemblies and oaths, which were the basis for social solidarity. In this way, binding the wolf of disorder, and paying a price for it, lay at the origins of social peace and culture. However, Fenrir will break his bonds at Ragnarok and the end of the world.³⁸ As among the Romans, however, there was a conceptual cross-entry that connected Odin to the beast of disorder. In Germanic societies, the wolf-mythos was characterized by this bipolarity. The warriors also emulated the image of strength and demonic ferocity associated with the wolf, thus lending popularity to the name *Wulf* for males and accounting for the development of wolf-fraternities, groups of warriors such as the *berserkir* who associated themselves with the wolf and tried to imitate its fierce qualities.³⁹ Cunning, unreliable, and mysterious, Odin, the god of warriors, was also associated with wolves.⁴⁰

The wolf was an anti-social creature in the symbolic imagination of Europe. Such a view of wolves is by no means confirmed by the scientific studies of naturalists. It is hard even to verify that wolves have ever attacked human beings.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the symbolism of the wolf as a savage creature opposed to humanity is a pervasive and potent image. According to the philosopher Epicurus, who prized the virtue of friendship, it was important to share meals with a friend. To eat alone was to live "the life of a lion or a wolf."⁴² To be wolf-like was to be solitary, non-social, and assimilated to barbarism. The wolf was also the diabolical enemy of faith and community in Jewish and Christian traditions. According to the Babylonian Talmud, Emperor Hadrian once said to Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah, "How difficult it is for a flock to graze among seventy wolves." This was an ironic remark, coming from the very man who threatened the Jews. Rabbi Joshua replied, "How strong is the Keeper who is able to save his flock from all of them?"⁴³ Hadrian often played the role of the representative of worldly political power in Midrashic dialogues.⁴⁴ According to Jesus, wolves also stalked the Christian sheep (John 10:11–12). In Christian iconography, accordingly, the wolf became the symbol of evil or Satan.⁴⁵

The lesson to be gained from this line of reflection was that communities are never allowed to flourish in peace. Some price has to be paid to create and protect them. According to Rabbi Chanina, in a saying collected in the classic midrashic anthology, the *Pirke Aboth*, we should "pray for the welfare of the government, since but for the fear thereof, men would swallow each other alive."⁴⁶ Likewise Rabbi Joshua: "the evil inclination, and hatred of his fellow-creatures drive a man out of the world."⁴⁷ Thus for the Jewish sages, community and religious life were threatened by the wolfish nature of man. This was proverbial in the pagan world as well: "Man is a wolf to man," according to Plautus. The humanist scholar Erasmus collected this saying in his *Adages*, in its Latin version: *Homo homini lupus*.⁴⁸

The psychological dimension of the wolf mythos was explored with pressured intensity in a strange treatise written by Robert Eisler in 1949. This work, *Man into Wolf*, ranged over psychology, history, and mythology in an effort to explain the human wolfishness and terrorism of Hitler's Europe during World War II, during which Eisler suffered as a prisoner in Buchenwald and Dachau.⁴⁹ After all, it should be recalled that the political concepts of terror and terrorism first evolved to describe state-sponsored crimes. Alexander Abusch, for example, described the violence of the Nazi regime in those terms: "Cannibalism with the most modern technology . . . total terror against the opposition within, total aggression against the [opposition] outside."⁵⁰ For their part, the Nazis were fascinated with the Germanic backdrop they imagined for their regime: the ancient figures of the wolf and the werewolf were a frequent feature of Nazi self-mythologizing and thus of the Nazi embrace of crime.⁵¹

Medieval kings and bishops expelled criminals from the community as a means of establishing peace. Alongside the political and legal dimension of this act, one can point to a mythic and religious impulse: the social order took shape from the crude banishment and rejection of the unclean violence of men. To expel the criminal was to bind the wolfish side of human nature, to make the legal world tangible and whole by excluding the lawless. In the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms outlawry could be imposed on one who refused to undertake his responsibility to participate in the hearings and legal work of the folk court organized around the Hundred.⁵² It has been suggested that the fear of demonized criminal beings, wearing a wolf's head, may reflect an actual practice of masking and shape changing. In his research on the Italian cult of the Benandanti, Carlo Ginzburg postulated "a connection between werewolves and the sabbat which has the benandanti as an intermediate link," a series of historical phenomena in which we see "figures in a vast, half-obliterated stratum of beliefs imbued with shamanistic overtones."⁵³ There is also a probable connection between the "wolf's head" of the outlaw with the war-mask or warrior's helmet.⁵⁴ According to an ethnographic treatise of the humanist scholar Johann Boehme, writing in the sixteenth century, masking rituals were still common, in which men would try to "represent satyrs or evil demons."⁵⁵ It is possible that some of the bodies found preserved in the bogs of Denmark may reflect a similar set of practices and associated beliefs. Many of the bodies of the "bog men" were pinned down, as if those who killed them feared their return as vengeful ghosts or werewolves.⁵⁶ Folke Ström drew a connection to the desolate setting of those executions: bogs, fens and swamps that were the "haunts of evil powers, ghosts and trolls."⁵⁷ The fear of werewolves was revived and intensified in the twelfth century, during a period Caroline Walker Bynum calls the "werewolf renaissance."⁵⁸ Men considered to be werewolves were still captured and killed in the Europe of Boehme's day.

When the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison first came to light, Senator James Inhofe (R-Okla.) defended the practices of the guards there, complaining, "I got a little bit weary of everyone talking about human rights abuses."⁵⁹ The treatment of these prisoners should not evoke pity or concern, he argued, because of the type of person in question: "These detainees are not normal detainees, they are terrorists, they are murderers, and many of them have probably been involved in murdering Americans."⁶⁰ Thus it would seem that for some Americans, a presumption of guilt, or the nature of a crime, may open the

door toward the use of torture. A similar view long had prominence during the Middle Ages. Here again is a conceptual cross-entry: an evidently widely held but seldom articulated view that it is necessary to fight terror with terror.

De Tortura

Jean Bethke Elshtain and others argue that it is dangerous to aspire to moral purity when faced with a danger such as terrorism; others, such as Michael Ignatieff, argue that "necessity may require the commission of bad acts, which necessity, nevertheless, cannot absolve of their morally problematic character."⁶¹ Ignatieff nevertheless argues that torture should be forbidden because it is incompatible with democratic society. The arguments against torture are usually limited to questions of practical value and possible impact on the United States. One common argument holds that the United States should not use torture because otherwise U.S. soldiers might be tortured in future conflicts. On the other hand, the United States has gained a reputation for engaging in torture that may cling to it for decades. It must be admitted that such debates do not strike very far, if we believe, following Aristotle, that there is an ethical dimension to politics.⁶²

Torture was used in Roman trials, principally in cases involving slaves. Slaves could be tortured if suspected of adultery with the master's wife or of murdering the master.⁶³ Torture was also used on freemen in cases of treason or magic and possibly also for homosexuality. Those who confessed to such crimes might be left permanently in prison or sent to the mines [*in metallum*], one of the most dreaded of punishments.⁶⁴ The use of torture gradually disappeared in Europe during the early Middle Ages, but it returned with the revival of Roman law during the twelfth-century Renaissance.⁶⁵ The study of Roman law was resuscitated late in the eleventh century by the scholars of Bologna after the discovery of a complete manuscript of the Digest. In the ensuing centuries, the prestige of Roman law grew enormously. The use of Roman law by the officials and advisors of medieval kings offered enormous potential for heightening royal authority on the model of the emperors of Rome and for the development of monarchical control of institutions inside kingdoms.⁶⁶

There were attempts to limit the use of torture by hedging it with legal procedure. In medieval Europe, it was commonly held that torture should only be applied to a suspect against whom there was a strong presumption of guilt [*presumptio vehemens*].⁶⁷ Gathering evidence was only one aspect of torture, which always carried the intention of punishment and deliberate cruelty. One of the first denunciations of torture in the European tradition appeared in a work known as the *Oculus pastoralis*, composed in the 1220s.⁶⁸ The treatise offers praise of the beauty of law and argues that the ruler of a city [*podestà*] must confine his actions within the limits of the law. The worst abuse of executive power, according to this anonymous author, was the use of torture. According to Kenneth Pennington the *Oculus pastoralis* showed an awareness that "torture fundamentally undermines any idea of due process."⁶⁹ Nevertheless, torture continued to be used in European courts until the Enlightenment, when learned voices were then raised against it: the jurist Christian Thomasius argued that the practice of torture was incompatible with Christian society in his work of 1705, *De Tortura*.⁷⁰ Later, a lucid essay by the Italian jurist Beccaria (1738–93), *On Crimes and Punishments*, turned the tide

of European opinion against the use of torture. To begin with, Beccaria argued, “no man can be judged a criminal until he be found guilty.”⁷¹ If a court knows that a suspect is guilty, then torture is unnecessary. If a suspect is innocent, on the other hand, he should not be tortured.⁷² This argument seemed incontrovertible, and torture soon began to disappear (officially) across Europe. Less well known, perhaps, is the fact that Beccaria also condemned secret tribunals and secret accusations, such as those now used by the United States.⁷³

Torture undermines due process. Torture also undermines the human world more generally, a fact that is recognized by torturers and victims alike. This is why torture continued to be used in Europe as a method of warfare, punishment, and terror during both World Wars, in Greece during the 1960s, and by the French in Algeria.⁷⁴ The torturer endeavors to trap his or her victim in a hidden heterocosm where the torturer’s power is absolute. The desire for a special hidden world can be illustrated by the evident connections between the practice of torture and the imagery of hell. Torture took hold in European legal life in the very period in which Dante helped to extend the imagery of hell in such a horrible fashion: one of the prisoners of Dante’s hell, for example, suffers from the most horrifying implements of torture of the ancient world, the “bull of Phalaris.” The victim of the bull of Phalaris would be shut up inside a bull made of brass, so that when the body of the bull was heated by a fire underneath the belly, the bull would seem to bellow, as the cries of the victim escaped from the bull’s mouth. This torture, associated with Phalaris the tyrant of Acragas in Sicily (ca. 570–554 BCE), was a common image of the summit of pain and the cruelty of tyrants. In canto 27 of Dante’s *Inferno*, Guido da Montefeltro is enclosed in the bull of Phalaris, and as the flames plunge him into unimaginable pain, Guido conveys to the listening poet a political doctrine that presupposes the universality of cruelty and cunning.⁷⁵ Dante imagines this and other tortures in a period when torture was becoming common in criminal trials. There was thus a commerce of political practice and methods of torture between an imagined hell and the prisons of the real world.

Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1462–1516) also greatly extended the visual language of torment.⁷⁶ It is striking how many of the tortures portrayed in Bosch’s great panel “The Garden of Delights” or in his “The Last Judgement” have been experienced in American facilities: hooding, water-boarding, nakedness, sexual humiliations, subjection to loud sound, binding, and consignment to perpetual darkness.⁷⁷ Today the practice of torture is probably not guided by traditionally hellish images but by the modern versions of hell—the tortures, deaths, and shocks of the horror movie, where the visual language of torment now resides and develops. Unlike the earlier imagery of hell, the horror movie is marked by a nasty and arbitrary tone from which a moral dimension is ordinarily missing. American soldiers in one U.S. facility called their prison “The Blacksmith Hotel”—a bleak reference to the horror-movie quality of the place and the torture practiced there. It is sometimes noted that while the torturer sets out to deprive his or her victim of humanity, it is the *torturer* who is dehumanized, becoming a mask and depraved instrument of arbitrary power. The notorious photographs from Abu Ghraib reveal the sense of excitement and delight experienced by the torturer as he or she triumphs over the victim. The triumph is shallow, so the game must be constantly renewed.

Those suspected of terrorism today, like certain noteworthy and terrible criminals of the ancient world, emerge as enemies of all good men or even as enemies of the human race [*inimici humani generis*], terms used by Cicero to denounce Catiline for his plot to subvert the Roman state.⁷⁸ The use of torture in recent years is based on the imaginative rejection of persons from the ordinary world of law. In a study of the revival of outlawry, we should also examine the developing notion that there are absolute crimes that put suspects beyond the pale of social and legal norms and thus outside the scope of all law. The tension of emergency is held to change the legal standards and requirement. Cicero undertook a public, legal confrontation with the criminal Catiline in his four orations *In Catilinam* of 63 BCE, although he ordered Catiline's accomplices killed without trial.⁷⁹

The Prince and the Law

Anger, fear, and hatred seem to have awakened a kind of legal atavism, causing a reversal of traditional American ideals and an apparent revival of premodern principles. Despite the revelation of torture at Abu Ghraib and the prosecution of some of the soldiers involved, the practice of removing certain prisoners from the realm of human law at Guantanamo Bay and by kidnap and deportation to other countries for detention at secret 'black site' prisons in Europe and elsewhere has faced little effective opposition and continues in 2007.⁸⁰ Supreme Court decisions and direct legislation by Congress proved unable to dissuade administration officials such as Dick Cheney from endorsing, for example, the use of simulated drowning during interrogations.⁸¹ Many commentators, legal scholars, and diplomats in the United States and abroad have evinced surprise and dismay that the United States has abandoned "long-standing principles of humane conduct"⁸² and appears to disregard the international laws it helped establish.⁸³ Arguments in favor of suspending due process, frequently made by those in power and those in favor of outlawry and the system of secret prisons, are perhaps the most surprising element of the policy. To summarize, the use of torture, secret prisons, and detention without hearings is not simply a retreat from the standards of postwar America and its own Enlightenment inheritance, but taking a longer perspective, it is also a departure from the Western legal tradition, and from the medieval tradition of common law, and thus represents a return to an earlier primitive and mythic approach.

Evasions of due process have often been attempted by the prince. In 1679 the English Parliament enacted the "Habeas Corpus Amendment Act," more descriptively entitled: "An act for the better securing of the liberty of the subject and for the prevention of imprisonment beyond the seas." To avoid the restraint of *habeas corpus*, the king had removed James Harrington from the Tower of London and put him on an island beyond the reach of English law. Charles II did something similar with other political prisoners. In response, Parliament declared that no subject should be sent to "Scotland, Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey, Tangier, or into any parts . . . beyond the seas."⁸⁴ Behind the Act lay an old principle of common law, going back to *Magna Carta* (Article 39) and earlier, forbidding arbitrary seizure of persons. This has traditionally been an important doctrine in the United States as well, although detainees in recent wars are now often "disappeared," moved from place to place, or held in Guantanamo Bay

(GTMO), a place beyond the seas and believed to be outside of all jurisdictions and all law: thus “the Torture Statute does not apply to the conduct of US personnel at GTMO.”⁸⁵

The development of judicial due process, beginning in the twelfth century, replaced the earlier, crude reliance on banishment and expulsion, what R.C. van Caenegem once called “the clumsy and fierce punishment of outlawry, one of the mainstays of primitive justice.”⁸⁶ In that sense, arbitrary expulsion, arrest, and detention are at the opposite end of the spectrum from due process, of the kind embodied in *habeas corpus*. Prior to 1250, European princes tended to believe that they could sometimes suspend or ignore certain legal rules or the requirements of judicial process, because these were held to be an aspect of positive law [*ius positivum*], which is to say law made by the prince for his kingdom. Since the law of the kingdom was made by the prince, such rules and requirements could be set aside by the prince.⁸⁷ To use the terminology of medieval legal scholarship, positive law lay in the prince’s hand. Throughout the period 1150 to 1250, however, European jurists developed the principle that the prince could not ignore or overrule judicial due process, because it was based not on the law of a particular prince or kingdom [*ius proprium*] but on natural law [*lex naturalis*] or the law of nations [*ius gentium*]. The opposing view was encapsulated in the maxim of Roman law: “The prince is not bound by the laws” [*princeps legibus solutus est*].⁸⁸ The dictum would aptly characterize the current legal doctrine of the U.S. government during the War on Terror. According to the “Working Group Report,” the executive has wide latitude to initiate or to disregard “due process.”⁸⁹ The conditions of war liberate the president from all statute law: he has “complete discretion” during wartime.⁹⁰

Perhaps it is possible to reassert not the method but the legal principles of the Glossators, the scholars in medieval Bologna who developed the art of commenting on (glossing) Roman Law. The meticulous and vast commentary of Accursius on the *Corpus Iuris*, the *Glossa Ordinaria* (or *Magna Glossa*), summarized and became the last great achievement of the Bolognese school.⁹¹ In the work of Accursius one can see that “[t]he dross of the occasional and the contingent was perfectly eliminated; what remained were the concepts and doctrines in all their purity, principles and legal problems, unadorned and thought through anew in their full abstraction.”⁹² Accursius accepted the role of a strong sovereign that could be discerned in the precepts of Roman law but held that the prince must view himself as bound by the law: the law was prior to sovereignty. “Not every statement of the Prince is a law,” nor should a judge recognize any law or action of the prince that contradicted previous law.⁹³ The realm of law was held to have more weight and importance than the will of the prince. Moreover, the greater principles involved in law, justice, and equity could also be shown to have an origin external to the state: the principles are old and transcendent, while rulers come and go.

The jurist Paucapela believed that “justice transcended positive law.”⁹⁴ Johannes Monachus (d. 1313) maintained that even the pope could not dispense with the absolute right of a defendant to have his case heard in court. According to Johannes, “anyone at all is presumed innocent unless proven guilty” [*item qui libet presumitur innocens nisi probetur nocens*].⁹⁵ Legal historian van Caenegem marvels at the development of due process in English and Flemish law of the twelfth

century: "That crime should be prosecuted and punished by public authority, through rational forms of process and by a network of state officials and judges seems obvious enough to us, but was a truly prophetic vision of the twelfth century."⁹⁶ The development of due process is part of a twelfth-century legal revolution that gave rise to a science of jurisprudence and the prominence of jurists and judges.⁹⁷

The use of torture and secret imprisonment and the disappearing of prisoners are connected by two interlocking legal principles: first, that human rights and due process are only guaranteed by the particular law code [*ius proprium*] of a state. As Paolo Prodi rightly suggests, jurisprudence ought be open to other law, as in the *ius commune* of medieval Europe; lacking that dimension, "human beings are now subjected to the absolute dictates of positive law and to the power and authority of the modern state."⁹⁸ This is the basis on which the American state, which makes absolute decisions regarding human beings, believes it possible to declare some persons to be outside the law, thereby stripping them of all rights and legal protection.

Some would argue that the technical exclusion of the Taliban or al-Qaeda fighters from coverage by Geneva III is not the only consideration. The Geneva prohibitions of torture or insistence on due process for detainees have gained such widespread acceptance among other nations of the world that they have the status of "customary international law" and are therefore binding. In the 2003 "Working Group Report" prepared for then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, it is stated that "[t]he Department of Justice has concluded that customary international law cannot bind the Executive Branch under the Constitution, because it is not federal law."⁹⁹ The text cited here is the "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales."¹⁰⁰ The "Memorandum" goes on to argue that international treaties, such as the Geneva Conventions (Geneva III), are subject to termination or temporary suspension by the executive power. Customary international law cannot bind the president.¹⁰¹ Thus there is no law or norm above the positive law of the state, and during wartime, runs the doctrine, the executive is not bound by statute law.

What is rejected in this argument is an old principle of the Western legal tradition. In the Middle Ages, the concept of a common law, or *ius commune*, was expressed in this way: "Roman law is the general law for everyone" [*quia lex romana est generalis omnium*].¹⁰² Many had hoped that international custom might serve as a replacement for a common law, or *ius commune*, for the modern world of states.

Humanism and the Inhuman

The question arises whether any terrain still lies open for humanism and whether a path can be discovered for the return of common law and the traditional concerns of politics. Tzvetan Todorov has suggested that to retrieve humanism, we should begin with the fact of community and our need for communal life. Developing certain principles and suggestions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Todorov hopes to develop a humanism based on lived experience rather than ghostly abstractions: according to Todorov, Rousseau discovered "a new conception of man as a being who *needs others*."¹⁰³ Todorov thus shows a reluctance to drink very deeply from

the well of the Enlightenment. Alongside his renewal of humanism there is a revival and retrieval of classical philosophy, thankfully distant from the stilted vision of Leo Strauss, for example, on the part of historian Pierre Hadot, theologian and philanthropist Jean Vanier, and philosopher Comte-Sponville.

The hope of a renewed humanism can raise for us the theme of solidarity. Lasting friendships, the camaraderie of social groups, marriage, romantic partnerships, and other binding solidarities seem to place *philia* or friendship at the heart of social order and the possibility of self-fulfillment.¹⁰⁴ In his reading of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Thomas Aquinas argued that the virtue of friendship with oneself and with others is the basis of political concord, which is "found among virtuous men." Such persons "behave in such a way that they are in accord with themselves and one another" in their mutual striving for virtue.¹⁰⁵ Thus for Cicero, who was in accord with the Aristotelian view, political isolation was desolation.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to all such themes of solidarity is the outlaw, the person who undermines the community and departs from it in vengeful solitude. The late modern state, alongside other powerful forces such as economic globalization, seems to promote social fission and individualization: "There is a nasty fly of impotence in the sweet ointment of the kind of freedom that has been shaped through the pressures of individualization."¹⁰⁷ Thus it could be said that the possibility of community now lies somewhere between the state and the outlaw, both of which labor against it. Nevertheless, it is an old and durable idea that community and culture can only develop when people can find security from outlawry.

In the famous prologue of Thucydides's *Peloponnesian War*, known as the Archaeology, the characteristic forms of Greek civilization, peaceful life, and self-fulfillment in a city-state only became possible with the end of piracy. The pirate was the solitary enemy of peace, communication, and culture.¹⁰⁸ For centuries the symbol of the wolf has been assigned to such persons. But what does exclusion from the legal world and humanity mean in the contemporary world? Since 2002, as has been discussed above, the White House has maintained that the president of the United States can exclude certain individuals from the realm of law and the circle of humanity by declaring them to be "enemy combatants." Such persons are held to have no rights and can be protected neither by national laws nor by international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions. Viewed as comparable to wolves, such persons are imprisoned without hope of trial and are not protected from the use of torture. The enemy combatant is an outcast, unable to claim any law. The creation of this category was intended to strip, rather than to assign, a legal identity. The person captured and suspected of involvement in terrorism becomes an exile from every land and every law. Traditional restraints against the maltreatment of prisoners can be put aside: he is treated as a demonic being, wearing a wolf's head, outside the law. The enemy combatant thus appears to be a revival of a premodern legal category, which has reappeared while judicial process is once again said to lie in the hand of the prince. The jurist Johannes Monachus (d. 1313) long ago reasoned that "everyone should be presumed innocent unless proven guilty" [*Item quilibet presumitur innocens nisi probetur nocens*], a principle that he believed must even bind the popes. According to Pennington, the reasoning of Johannes Monachus gradually became widely acknowledged as a principle that bound and regulated the prince: "the jurists even decided that justice demanded that the devil himself must be given a hearing in court."¹⁰⁹

These symbols and concepts serve to exclude dangerous enemies and serve to strengthen a sense of American community. We live in dangerous times, it is often said, and new rules apply. But the turn to new rules might itself lead to new times. As Quentin Skinner reminds us, notions of liberty and independence of the early modern period resisted the notion that the rights of the citizen should lie in the powerful hands of a government. This doctrine, inscribed in the founding documents of the United States, is compromised by recent changes in legal and political doctrine.¹¹⁰ The acceptance of legal doctrines stripped of the notion of humanity would represent a change in the American legal constellation. The Declaration of Independence expressed an ideal of *humanity* as the subject of rights: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights..." It would be naïve to think that such ideals, developed in coffee shops and secret societies of the eighteenth century at considerable personal risk to the thinkers, now reside safe by their inscription in an old document or because of their historical influence over the formation of a state that has changed considerably since then. What has been introduced is the idea that rights are not endowed by the Creator but by currently existing political authorities, and then only if those regimes are judged to be viable, a viability to be determined by the executive power of the United States. The return of outlawry therefore has implications for a definition of the subject of rights and puts the idea of humanity into doubt. We are already asked to accept the principle that our civil liberties should yield to national security, and as Skinner maintains, this means accepting a certain level of servitude.¹¹¹ It is extremely improbable that the reduction of the sphere of rights will only affect the terrorist outlaw.

There has been a shift in the modern world toward a situation in which the realm of positive law, the particular law of the state, has broken free from all comparison with higher laws, ethics, custom, or common law. Thus according to Prodi, the modern State acts as if its enactments and legal claims are not subject to any restraint or comparison with a higher or better law.¹¹² This means that "human beings are now subjected to the absolute dictates of positive law and to the power and authority of the modern state."¹¹³

As long ago as 1995, in response to the growing absolutism of positive law and the phenomenon of state intervention in the sphere of rights, Paul Ricoeur argued that we must reassert, in a new form, the inheritance of the Enlightenment and thereby attempt to lay claim to "the rights of *humanity*, in the precise sense of this term—that is, the rights attached to human beings as human beings and not as members of some political community conceived of as the source of positive rights."¹¹⁴ We are wrong to imagine that the State is the sole source of right, as an entity with a singular and unchallenged capacity to offer humanity and human rights.

The old idea of the wolfish-outlaw, as it makes a comeback, is relevant to the question of whether legal humanism is still possible in our time. In the view of the legal historian Francesco Calasso, the fourteenth-century jurist Bartolus of Sassoferato recognized the human and humane dimension of the law, and developed a legal humanism of a noble type, involving "not just discovery and exaltation of humankind but defense of them in thought and in action."¹¹⁵ The

assertion of the nobility and applicability of the *ius commune* as a canon of comparison for the law of particular states [*ius proprium*] and reference to a jurist like Bartolus on Roman Law, now seem hopelessly outmoded and bound by the intellectual conditions and conventions of the fourteenth century. Can we still assert a human-centered ideal of community, based on friendship, and binding solidarity among and between individuals? Friendship with oneself, viewed as part of the “fundamental constitution of humanity,” might form the basis for a reawakening of the classical political demand for amity and justice.¹¹⁶

With tremendous energy, the late modern state projects its vision of an *abridged* humanity. The fact that “man is a wolf to man,” so horribly verified in the World Trade Center attack, has led to a vengeful retreat from old ideals of judicial due process.¹¹⁷ At the same time, we can point to a loosening of the bonds of local and friendly associations based on love and fellow feeling in favor of distant and false bonds based on hatred and fear, all in order to bind the primordial wolf. The poet Goethe once declared that national hatred has a peculiar quality: “You will always find it strongest and most violent where there is the lowest degree of culture.”¹¹⁸ Displays of hatred have been common in recent years, thriving in a moral atmosphere of decline. Nationalism has formed the crucial backdrop to the legal atavism and return to more primitive forms of law described here. The attempt to preserve a humane culture and to assert our rights or our love of the right, should not be left in the hands of a distant state, since these are qualities of the virtuous life. One should highlight the possibility of friendship and the connections between friendship, liberty, and joy. It is by no means easy to orient oneself during a period such as this one.

While pondering the theme of this essay, I went on retreat to the monastery of Maria Laach (*Monasterium Sanctae Mariae ad Lacum*). Walking the paths lined with ancient beech trees or sitting in the quiet of the old liturgical library, I found that the topic troubled my thoughts. It seemed like a violation of the peace of the monastery to study torture and terrorism inside the walls, and yet those walls gave my reflections a hopeful and dignified frame. We have been given the world as a setting in which to practice virtue and to attain self-knowledge; we are also bidden to study the world and the human tradition. Only this can open the prospect of contemplative happiness, “to which the whole of political life seems directed.”¹¹⁹ In periods of disturbance and change, personal constancy and discussions with like-minded friends become more important. If we can remain true to our friends, then “new paths will appear, enabling us to practice spirituality.”¹²⁰

Notes

I completed research for this essay while a guest scholar at the Max-Planck Institut für europäische Rechtsgeschichte (Frankfurt) and during a retreat in the Monastery of Maria Laach. I am grateful to these scholars and monks.

1. Rudolf von Thadden, *Prussia: The History of a Lost State*, trans. Angi Rutter (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 78–79.
2. James Ross, “A History of Torture,” in *Torture: Does It Make Us Safer? Is It Ever OK? A Human Rights Perspective* (New York: The New Press/Human Rights Watch, 2005), pp. 3–17.

3. Quoted in *Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest, Detention and Exile*, Yearbook on Human Rights: First Supplementary Volume (New York: United Nations, 1959), p. 245.
4. Office of Legal Counsel, U.S. Department of Justice, "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales, Counsel to the President, and William J. Haynes II, General Counsel of the Department of Defense," 22 January 2002, and "Working Group Report on Detainee Interrogations in the Global War on Terrorism: Assessment of Legal, Historical, Policy, and Operational Considerations," 6 March 2003 (subsequently referred to as "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales" and "Working Group Report," respectively; part and section numbers will be provided for the "Memorandum," in addition to page numbers). Both of these documents are available on-line: "The Interrogation Documents: Debating U.S. Policy and Methods," *The National Security Archive*, George Washington University, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/index.htm>.
5. Maurizio Lupoi, *The Origins of the European Legal Order*, trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 371.
6. Bryce Lyon, *A Constitutional and Legal History of Medieval England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 100.
7. "Lupinum enim capud gerit a die utlagationis sue, quod ab Anglis wluesheued nominatur": quoted in Bruce R. O'Brien, *God's Peace and King's Peace: The Laws of Edward the Confessor* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 162–65.
8. *Pactus legis salicæ*, ed. Karl August Eckhardt, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Leges*, vol. 4.1 (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1962), 55.4 (A1) and 55.4 (H10), pp. 206–07.
9. Georg Christoph von Unruh, "Wargus: Friedlosigkeit und magisch-kultische Vorstellungen bei den Germanen," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung* 74 (1957): 12 [1–40].
10. See "uargus," in *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 AD*, comp. Alexander Souter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949).
11. "Et si aliqua est quae se dicat cum daimonum turba, in similitudinem mulierum transformata, certis noctibus equitare super quasdam bestias, et in eorum consortio adnumeratam esse, haec talis omnimodis scopes correpta, ex parochia ejiciatur" (10.29): Burchard of Worms, *Decretorum Libri XX*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. [Jacques]-[Paul] Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1844–64), 140:837. On soothsayers, Burchard wrote, "Vaticinatores, qui se futura scire dicunt, caesi de civitate ejiciantur" (10.22): in *Patrologia Latina*, 140:836.
12. Unruh, "Wargus," pp. 35–37.
13. "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales" (IV.b), p. 31.
14. "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales" (IV.b), p. 31.
15. "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales" (III.b), p. 20. See also section V.a, p. 34.
16. "Working Group Report," p. 21.
17. Felix Liebermann, "Die Friedlosigkeit bei den Angelsachsen," in *Festschrift Heinrich Brunner*, ed. Max Pappenheim (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1910), pp. 17–37.
18. Liebermann, "Die Friedlosigkeit," p. 25.
19. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 60–61.
20. Rudolf Sohm, *Études sur les institutions germanique: La procédure de la Lex Salica*, trans. Marcel Thévenin (Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1873), p. 86.
21. Lupoi, *The Origins of the European Legal Order*, p. 371.
22. Nino Tamassia, *Lelemento germanico nella storia del diritto italiano* (1887; repr. *Scritti di Storia giuridica*, 2 vols. [Padua: Cedam-Casa Editrice Dott. Antonio Milani, 1964]), 1:7; quoted in Lupoi, *The Origins of the European Legal Order*, p. 372.

23. In this sense, "utlagaria was at the very heart of Anglo-Saxon law" (Lupoi, *The Origins of the European Legal Order*, p. 386). See also Marco Scovazzi, *Le origini del diritto germanico* (Milan: Giuffr, 1957), p. 279.
24. Sohm, *tudes*, pp. 116–23.
25. *Pactus legis salicae*, 55.4 (H10), p. 207.
26. Berman, *Law and Revolution*, p. 61.
27. Jean Imbert, *Les temps carolingiens (741–891). L'glise: Les institutions*, in *Histoire du droit et des institutions de l'glise en occident*, ed. Gabriel Le Bras and Jean Gaudemet, vol. 1 (Paris: ditions Cujas, 1994), pp. 60–67.
28. Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 32.
29. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, pp. 32–34.
30. Imbert, *Les temps carolingiens*, p. 61.
31. Imbert, *Les temps carolingiens*, p. 63.
32. O.F. Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1995), p. 6.
33. Georges Dumzil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, trans. Philip Krapp, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1:255.
34. *Titi Livi Ab Urbe Condita*, ed. R.M. Ogilvie (1974; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 1.4.
35. Engelbert Kirschbaum, "Wolf," in *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, 8 vols. (Rome: Herder, 1968–76), 4:536–39.
36. Unruh, "Wargus," pp. 10–11; see also Robert Eisler, *Man into Wolf: An Anthropological Interpretation of Sadism, Masochism and Lycanthropy* (Santa Barbara, CA: Ross-Erikson, 1978), pp. 230–34.
37. See Georges Dumzil, *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*, trans. Einar Haugen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 44–48.
38. See E.O.G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), pp. 280–81.
39. See Unruh, "Wargus," pp. 38–39.
40. See Folke Strm, *On the Sacral Origin of the Germanic Death Penalties* (Stockholm: Wahlstrm and Widstrand, 1942), p. 148, and Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 65.
41. See the following classic monographs: Adolf Murie, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley* (1944; repr. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985) and L. David Mech, *The Wolf: The Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970).
42. Quoted in Epistle 19, "On Worldliness and Retirement," of Seneca's *Moral Epistles*; see Seneca, *Epistles 1–65*, trans. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, UK: Loeb Classical Library, 1917), pp. 124–31.
43. *Tractate Gittin* (58b), quoted in *The Book of Legends, Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*, ed. Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, trans. William G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), p. 227.
44. See Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 27 and 182.
45. See also the idiosyncratic but useful work of Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ*, trans. D.M. Dooling (New York: Parabola Books, 1991), pp. 138–42.
46. *Pirke Aboth*, 3:2 and 2:16.
47. *Pirke Aboth*, 3:2 and 2:16.
48. William Barker, *The Adages of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 41.
49. Eisler, *Man into Wolf*, pp. 12–13.

50. "Kannibalismus mit modernster Technik...; totaler Terror gegen die Opposition im Innern, totale Aggression nach Außen": Alexander Abusch, *Der Irrweg einer Nation* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1946), pp. 250 and 240; quoted in "Terror, Terrorismus," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, 8 vols. (Stuttgart, 1972–97), 6:323–444.
51. Carlo Ginzburg, "Germanic Mythology and Nazism: Thoughts on an Old Book by Georges Dumézil," in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 136 [126–45].
52. H.R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England, 500–1087* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 142.
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CHAPTER 10

EXTERIORITY IS NOT A NEGATION BUT A MARVEL: HOSPITALITY, TERRORISM, LEVINAS, *BEOWULF*

Eileen A. Joy

This essay considers Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of hospitality in relation to the "isolated and heroic being that the state produces by its virile virtues," through an analysis of female Chechen suicide terrorists in contemporary Russia and the figure of Grendel in the Old English poem Beowulf, in order to raise some questions about the relation between violence, justice, and sovereignty, both in the Middle Ages and in our own time.

He who does not realize to what extent shifting fortune and necessity hold in subjection every human spirit, cannot regard as fellow-creatures nor love as he loves himself those whom chance has separated from him by an abyss. The variety of constraints pressing upon man give rise to the illusion of several distinct species that cannot communicate. Only he who has measured the dominion of force, and knows how not to respect it, is capable of love and justice.

—Simone Weil, "The *Iliad*, or The Poem of Force"

Prolegomenon: Beyond the State in the State

In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Jacques Derrida argues that Levinas's philosophy, especially in *Totality and Infinity*, has bequeathed to us an "immense treatise of hospitality." According to Derrida, although "the word 'hospitality' occurs relatively seldom in *Totality and Infinity*, the word 'welcome' is unarguably one of the most frequent and determinative words in that text."¹ At the very outset of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes about the Other as the "Stranger [*l'Etranger*] . . . who disturbs the being at home with oneself [*le chez soi*]."² In the wake of this disturbance, the ethical subject "is incapable of approaching the Other with empty hands," and by way of "conversation" she welcomes the Other's "expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it."³ The welcoming [*accueilance*] of the expression of the stranger-Other is a

welcoming of a teaching [*enseignement*] that “comes from the exterior” and in which “the very epiphany of the face is produced.”⁴ This is a “face” that is not a material face, *per se*—the specific physical visage of a specific person—but is, rather, an “exteriority that is not reducible . . . to the interiority of memory,” an expression of being that “breaks through the envelopings” and *façades* of material form, exceeds any possible preconceptions, and calls into question the subject’s “joyous possession of the world.”⁵ At the same time, because “the body does not happen as an accident to the soul,” the physical face *is* the important “mode in which a being, neither spatial nor foreign to geometrical or physical extension, exists separately.” It is the “*somewhere* of a dwelling” of a being—of its solitary and separated being-with-itself.⁶

While Levinas describes the home, or *dwelling*, as a site of inwardness [*intimité*], from which the subject ventures *outside* herself (and therefore, the real home is always a rootless, wandering mode of being), he also points out that this inwardness “opens up in a home which is situated in that outside—for the home, as a building, belongs to a world of objects.”⁷ The home possesses two facades, and, thereby, two positions, for it “has a ‘street front,’ but also its secrecy. . . . Circulating between visibility and invisibility, one is always bound for the interior of which one’s home, one’s corner, one’s tent, one’s cave is the vestibule.”⁸ The home, then, is both the architectural site filled with material furnishings [*Bien-meubles*, or movable goods] that, by its very nature, is “hospitable to the proprietor,” as well as the site of interiority in which the subject withdraws from the elements and can “recollect” herself.⁹ Recollection [*recueillement*], for Levinas, is a kind of “coming to oneself, a retreat home with oneself as in a land of refuge, which answers to a hospitality, an expectancy, a human welcome.” This is, in essence, a kind of self-possession made possible by the subject possessing a home in which she is able to be *welcomed to herself*, which welcoming constitutes the condition by which a certain affection for herself is “produced as a gentleness that spreads over the face of things” and makes the welcome of the stranger-Other possible.¹⁰

As a result, the ethical self is also a “*sub-jectum*”; it is under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything. The unity of the universe is not what my gaze embraces in its unity of apperception, but what is incumbent on me from all sides . . . accuses me, is my affair.”¹¹ The “I” is ultimately the “non-interchangeable *par excellence*” and also “the state of being a hostage,” and it is only “through the condition of being hostage that there can be in this world pity, compassion, pardon and proximity.” Even more pointedly, Levinas writes, “the word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and everyone,” and we are always summoned “as someone irreplaceable.”¹² Levinas’s philosophy of the ethical relation to the stranger-Other poses a stern (and perhaps wildly unrealizable) political imperative, for, as Levinas himself puts it, “the first, fundamental, and unforgettable exigency of justice is the love of the other man in his uniqueness.”¹³

In Derrida’s view, Levinas’s ideas regarding the welcoming of the enigmatic face of the stranger-Other is a type of hospitality that is “not simply some region of ethics” or “the name of a problem in law or politics: it is ethnicity itself, the whole and the principle of ethics.”¹⁴ More importantly, Levinas’s “infinite and unconditional hospitality” raises the difficult question of whether or not Levinas’s philosophy “would be able to found a law and politics, beyond the familial dwelling,

within a society, nation, State, or Nation-State.”¹⁵ How would such an ethics be “regulated in a particular or juridical practice? How might it, in turn, regulate a particular politics or law? Might it give rise to—keeping the same names—a politics, a law, or a justice for which none of the concepts we have inherited under these names would be adequate?”¹⁶ How, also, might Levinas’s thought be seen as a provocation to “think the passage between the ethical...and the political, at a moment in the history of humanity and of the Nation-State when the persecution of all of these hostages—the foreigner, the immigrant (with or without papers), the exile, the refugee, those without a country, or State, the displaced person or population (so many distinctions that call for careful analysis)—seems, on every continent, open to a cruelty without precedent”?¹⁷

In Derrida’s view, Levinas, through “discreet though transparent allusions...oriented our gaze toward what is happening today,” to the call of “the refugees of every kind...for a change in the socio- and geo-political space.”¹⁸ One could even say that present crimes against humanity actually *intensify* the urgency of Levinas’s voice on the matter, and we might also ask how Levinas’s hospitality marks (or opens) an important door [*porte*] into a dwelling that must ultimately be “beyond the State in the State”?¹⁹ Levinas touches upon the question in his conclusion to *Totality and Infinity*, where he writes that “[i]n the measure that the face of the Other relates us with a third party, the metaphysical relation of the I with the Other moves into the form of a We, aspires to a State, institutions, laws, which are the source of universality. But politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus as in absentia.”²⁰ Although the individual ethical subject is ultimately made invisible by the state’s insistence on “universality,” and therefore hospitality has to define itself, in certain singular situations, *against* the state, the state nevertheless reserves a framework for it (through various of its institutions, such as citizenship and law courts and bills of rights), and also operates as a placeholder of borders that will need to be transgressed in order for true ethics to be possible. Although the democratic state, in Levinas’s view, can function as a rational political order that ends exile and violence and endows men with freedom, the world in which the welcoming of the stranger-Other is possible will always be radically different from the state, which, “with its *realpolitik*, comes from another universe, sealed off from sensibility, or protest by ‘beautiful souls,’ or tears shed by an ‘unhappy unconsciousness.’”²¹ There is a necessity for a type of politics that purposefully forces open a door [*porte*] in the place that marks the border *between* the enclosure of the state and the more perfect future that lies beyond it, and this politics is often accomplished, in different times and places, by what Levinas calls the “isolated and heroic being that the State produces by its virile virtues. Such a being confronts death out of pure courage and whatever the cause for which he dies.”²²

What I offer in this essay is a consideration of Levinas’s philosophy of hospitality in relation to that “isolated and heroic being that the State produces by its virile virtues,” through an analysis of the ethical “problem” of terrorism in the separate cases of female Chechen suicide bombers in contemporary Russia and Grendel in the Old English poem *Beowulf*. In the trauma that is created in the wake of disturbance of the violent, destroying stranger-Other—such as a Grendel or a suicide terrorist—how is welcoming, or hospitality (the very foundation of

ethicity), even possible? If the actual, material face is the “somewhere of a dwelling” of the stranger-Other whom we must welcome, how do the faces of those who have been determined ahead of time to be *too exterior* (read: too foreign or inhuman) forbid, yet also call more urgently for our welcoming of them? If the home constitutes the site of recollection (a *coming-to-oneseelf*) that is the condition for welcoming (a *going-out-of-oneseelf* to the Other), what happens to the ethical project of hospitality when the stranger-Other is actively trying to destroy that home (perhaps out of anomie, but also rage, over his or her own homelessness)? If, as Levinas argues, the “positive deployment of a pacific relation with the other, without frontier or any negativity, is produced in language,”²³ how can we make peace with those to whom we refuse to speak, and who, in turn, refuse to speak to us? In what way does terroristic violence (whether the anthropagy of a Grendel or the belted bomb of a suicide terrorist) simultaneously summon and accuse us as those who are irreplaceable? How, finally, do these terroristic figures signify and enact a type of violence (even, a type of radical evil) that the state itself simultaneously exercises and punishes?

Most likely written in a tenth- to eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon monastic setting²⁴ that would have been structured by a Christian ethics of hospitality, and taking as its subject an earlier, proto-Christian cultural milieu (Scandinavia in the *geardagum*, ‘old days’) that was also structured, in important ways, by particular socially regulated modes of hospitality, *Beowulf* reveals many of the fissures that often open up when the moral dictums “welcome the Stranger” and “love thy neighbor as thyself” run up against the troubling sociopolitical question, “what if the Stranger, or my neighbor, is also my enemy?” The dead bodies of Chechen women who have killed themselves and others in the course of their suicide missions within Russia pose the same troubling question and also serve as placeholders of Levinasian “faces” that, because they are both vulnerably and nakedly human but also enclose a terrifying will-to-death, challenge our ability to welcome the *expressions* of what we believe are the radically exterior beings concealed within. In the same way, the disfigured (and monstrous) yet still human form of Grendel, whom *Beowulf* describes as an *uncuðne nið* [unknown violence] (276),²⁵ both refuses all gestures of welcoming and recollection, while also calling into question the limits of the ethics (and even, the *law*) of hospitality that were clearly important in both Anglo-Saxon England and in the world of the poem. Indeed, Grendel’s presence, both as aggressive intruder, and later, as *displayed body pieces* (severed shoulder and head), inside the ceremonial dwelling of the great hall of Heorot points to a certain violent displacement and dispossession that seems intrinsic to the guest-host relationship, especially in the world of a poem where almost all of the violent episodes—between men and monsters, but also between men and men—happens within the walls of spaces, whether halls or caves, designated as *home*. As John Michael has written regarding the current “war on terror” and Derrida’s writing, by way of Levinas, on hospitality, “If the guest has power over the host, the power of a dangerous and perhaps impossible ethical demand, no one can ever be at home anywhere.”²⁶

I do not wish, at any point in this essay, to imply that there is a one-to-one correlation between the female Chechen suicide bombers and Grendel, for their “cases,” as it were, are very different: the former are real persons situated in a very real and troubling contemporary history, whereas Grendel is a fictional bogeyman

situated in a pseudo-historical, medieval text. And whereas the political crisis and motives of the suicide bombers can, without too much trouble, be well articulated, Grendel is a figure who appears to come from nowhere bearing an inscrutable hatred. But as figures bearing terroristic violence, they both pose a certain challenge to societies that claim not to know them nor to understand their aggression (or both). At the same time these societies are themselves caught up in cycles of aggression and murder for which they have devised legalistic and other justifications, yet terrorism, for these societies, is always supposedly prohibited and can only ever come *from the outside*. Both the suicide bombers and Grendel engage in forms of supposedly extralegal force that frustrate the very self-identity of societies that consider themselves “just” or “right,” and that either see no remedy under their laws for these terrifying invaders, or will not admit the possibility of one. 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 places of supposedly more ethical communities. Finally, through their ferocious aggression—which aggression, I would argue, is born out of particular *historical* moments as a kind of structural excess—both the Chechen women and Grendel perform what Levinas calls a “deadly jump” [*salto mortale*] over the abyss that separates the present from death, and thereby enter the horizon of the “not-yet,” which is “more vast than history itself” and “in which history is judged.”²⁷

It Gleams Like a Splendor But Does Not Deliver Itself

In Levinas's philosophy, “being-for-the-other” posits the possibility of transcending the burden of self and ego through a face-to-face relationship—what Levinas terms *la face-à-face sans intermédiaire*, “a facing without intermediary”—with the Other, who, “under all the particular forms of expression where the Other, already in a character's skin, plays a role—is . . . *pure expression*, an extradition without defense or cover, precisely the extreme rectitude of a *facing*, which in this nudity is an exposure unto death: nudity, destitution, passivity, and pure vulnerability.”²⁸ Further, this “pure expression” always exceeds any figurative limits we might put on it—“Expression, or the face, overflows images.”²⁹

Even though I know that, in Levinas's scheme of things, the face is not really a face, per se, but rather an expression that exceeds figuration, I have thought, obsessively, about the face of Zulikhan Elikhadzhiyeva, the twenty-year-old Chechen woman who approached the admissions booth of an outdoor rock festival at Moscow's Tushino airfield on 5 July 2003 and detonated the explosives strapped to her belt, killing only herself (another female bomber who was with her managed to kill herself and fourteen others).³⁰ Browsing the Internet one day searching for pictures of this event, partly due to my curiosity about the phenomenon of women who are suicide terrorists, I came across a photograph of Elikhadzhiyeva lying on her back between police barricades, blood splattered on the bottom edges of her shirt, one fist partially clenched over her heart, a beer can overturned on the ground beside her head, her eyes closed, her mouth half-open—the scene is almost peaceful, and her face, serene, if also vulnerable.³¹

I could not get Elikhadzhiyeva's face out of my mind when I first saw it, nor can I, even now. Elikhadzhiyeva's face haunts me precisely because it is what Levinas would have said is not really a face, but a *facade*, "whose essence is indifference, cold splendor, and silence," and in which "the thing which keeps its secret is exposed and enclosed in its monumental essence and in its myth, in which it gleams like a splendor but does not deliver itself."³² While there are some, I know, who will claim that it is not possible to be *captivated* (which is to say, to be *struck with wonder*) by such a face, the possessor of which is a suicide bomber (whom we call a *monster* and for whom some will argue no empathy is possible or even required), I would argue that, at the very least, this face—which is extraordinary in its exteriority—is a marvel that commands our attention and challenges us to take on the task, in Levinas's words, of responding "to the life of the other man," for we "do not have the right to leave him alone at his death."³³

Between October 2002, when roughly forty Chechen rebels, including over a dozen women, seized a theater in Moscow in the middle of a musical performance and held 800 theatergoers hostage, and September 2004, when more than a dozen Chechen rebels, also including women, seized a school in Beslan (in the southern republic of North Ossetia), Chechens and Russians have witnessed the emergence of what many consider to be a shocking phenomenon—female suicide bombers.³⁴ Because many Chechens reject the idea that these women have embraced a radical Islamic fundamentalism, and many Russians, conversely, have assumed that these women embody what they see as the "Palestinianization" of the Chechen rebellion,³⁵ a certain tension, confusion, and even hysteria attaches to the ways in which ordinary Russians and Chechens, government officials, and the international press have attempted to describe them. It has been said about the female Chechen suicide bombers, alternatively, that they have been kidnapped by Islamic extremists, given psychotropic drugs, and then raped as part of their coercion into doing what no woman would supposedly do of her own accord;³⁶ that they are emotionless "brick walls," "pre-programmed," "brainwashed," and "de-humanized";³⁷ that they are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder;³⁸ that they are blackmailed "zombies";³⁹ and that they are the harbingers of the fact that "something has come unglued at the heart of Chechen society."⁴⁰

Standing in stark opposition to the idea that the female bombers are somehow not in their right mind, or that they have been coerced against their will, are the statements of the women themselves, or of those who might have known something about their motives. In September 2003, an anonymous Chechen woman (going by the pseudonym "Kowa") told a BBC World Service reporter, "I have only one dream now, only one mission—to blow myself up somewhere in Russia, ideally in Moscow. . . . To take as many Russian lives as possible—this is the only way to stop the Russians from killing my people. . . . Maybe this way they will get the message once and for all."⁴¹ A surviving hostage of the Chechen rebel takeover of the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow in October 2003 told an Associated Press reporter that one of her female captors, whose husband and brother had been killed in the war with Russia, said the following: "I have nothing to lose, I have nobody left. So I'll go all the way with this, even though I don't think it's the right thing to do."⁴² Speaking of one of the first female Chechen suicide bombers, Elza Gazuyeva, who in November 2001 killed herself

and a Russian commander who she believed had ordered the execution of her husband, a woman interviewed in Grozny said of Gazuyeva, "She was, is and will remain a heroine for us."⁴³ Lisa Ling, who traveled to Chechnya in order to interview families of female suicide bombers for a *National Geographic* documentary on the subject, said in an interview that the female bombers "were normal girls" who, nevertheless, also "saw no way out. They saw their lives... as too difficult to handle, and when they reached that stage, in their minds, taking out the enemy was an opportunity to become a hero."⁴⁴

It is important to understand the larger historical context within which Elikhadzhiyeva and other Chechen women have committed themselves to murder and suicide—a context, moreover, that can be seen as conducive to, simultaneously, inhumanity, insanity, and the completely rational (and *sane*) desire for a revenge that could only be accomplished extralegally. Since 1999, when Russia reintroduced military forces into Chechnya in order to suppress the Chechen rebellion (a rebellion they had "put down" once before with massive bombing and other war campaigns in 1994 and 1995), but especially after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, when Russian president Valdmir Putin declared that the struggle against Chechen rebels was simultaneously a struggle against al-Qaeda-sponsored terrorism,⁴⁵ Chechen citizens have been plunged into a nightmarish cycle of vicious abuse, including abductions, torture, rape, assassination, and mass extermination. Of particular concern to international human rights organizations have been the systematic "sweep" operations and nighttime raids, on the part of the Russian military, that have resulted in the "disappearance" (likely after torture and extrajudicial execution) of thousands of Chechens since 1999.⁴⁶ According to a Human Rights Watch "Briefing Paper" on the subject published in March 2005, the Russian government "contends that its operations in Chechnya are its contribution to the global campaign against terrorism. But the human rights violations Russian forces have committed there, reinforced by the climate of impunity the government has created, have not only brought untold suffering to hundreds of thousands of civilians but also undermined the goal of fighting terrorism." In addition, "as part of Russia's policy of 'Chechenization' of the conflict, pro-Moscow Chechen forces have begun to play an increasingly active role in the conflict, gradually replacing federal troops as the main perpetrators of 'disappearances' and other human rights violations."⁴⁷ Most of the "disappeared" are men between the ages of eighteen and forty, although children and women have also been targeted, and although local and federal prosecutors routinely investigate abductions reported by families of the victims, no actual convictions have ever resulted from these investigations. According to Human Rights Watch, most of the cases "are closed or suspended after several months 'due to the impossibility of establishing the identity of perpetrators,'" and even "when detainees held in unacknowledged detention are released and the perpetrators established, no accountability process takes place."⁴⁸ There has also been evidence of Russian military forces burying executed Chechens in mass graves.⁴⁹ So, while on the one hand, the state, in the form of local and federal government authorities, is "investigating" the abductions and extrajudicial executions of Chechen citizens, with the other hand, in the form of its military, it is burying the evidence of the murder of its own citizens. To add to the general terror and despair of all this, the 2005 "Briefing Paper" also notes that in Grozny,

the capital of Chechnya, “most people . . . live in the partial ruins of apartment buildings damaged by relentless bombing campaigns. There is no running water and power outages are frequent.” In other areas, people “who have survived the chaos of two wars and actively protested the abuses perpetrated in their villages are now too terrified to open their door even to their neighbors.”⁵⁰ Such is the bleak world in which Elikhadzhiyeva and other female suicide terrorists were formed.

It has to be admitted that suicide terrorists do not play fair, since, as Jean Baudrillard writes, “they put their own deaths into play—to which there is no possible response (‘they are cowards’),” but they are also attempting to contest a system “whose very excess of power poses an insoluble challenge,” to which “the terrorists respond with a definitive act that is also not susceptible of exchange.”⁵¹ In turn, the government’s response is typically one of complete refusal to negotiate and flat-out extermination. After the siege at the school in Beslan, Putin told the press, “We shall fight against them, throw them in prisons, and destroy them.”⁵² Putin’s comments are typical of most state governments’ responses to terrorists. In April of 2004, in a speech delivered in Kansas City, Missouri, that referred to terrorist attacks in the cities of Karbala, Najaf, and Baghdad in Iraq, Vice President Dick Cheney stated, “Such an enemy cannot be deterred, cannot be contained, cannot be appeased, or negotiated with. It can only be destroyed. And that is the business at hand.”⁵³ On both sides, this is a zero-sum game, and it also raises the difficult question posed by Derrida: “What difference is there between, *on the one hand*, the force that can be just, or in any case deemed legitimate (not only an instrument in the service of the law but the practice and even the realization, the essence of *droit*), and *on the other other hand* the violence that one always deems unjust? What is a just force or a non-violent force?”⁵⁴ Because the current government of Russia, and the United States, whatever evidence to the contrary, do not identify themselves as tyrannies, but rather, as progressive democracies that supposedly set certain limits to the government’s use of force, terrorism—in particular, suicide terrorism—poses a special problem, because the perpetrator cannot be brought to court. And yet, suicide terrorism—at least, in the case of the female Chechens—can sometimes be a violence of desperate last resort.⁵⁵ It does not represent the first time the stranger-Other, who is also a citizen, has knocked on (or blown open) the door of the state and demanded recognition.⁵⁶ And in the case of Chechnya, especially, where the perpetrators of abuse against civilians, in “the vast majority of cases . . . are unquestionably government agents,”⁵⁷ the avenue of legal recourse for redress of abuses against civilians is obviously not open, except as an apparition.

We must never forget that terrorists are real persons with real lives grounded in all the material and psychic particularities of the local—Zulikhan Elikhadzhiyeva, for instance, lived with her sister in a brick house in a small Chechen village and studied at the medical vocational school there.⁵⁸ The two Chechen women, Amanat Nagayeva and Satsita Dzhbirkhanova, who brought down two Russian passenger planes in August 2004, killing themselves and eighty-nine other passengers, lived with two other women in a cramped, bombed-out apartment building in Grozny and worked selling clothing and other goods in the central market.⁵⁹ In his study *My Life Is a Weapon*, Christoph Reuter writes that suicide attackers “are not cruise missiles on two legs, killing machines who come out

of nowhere with the wrath of God or the murderous orders of a cult leader programmed into them. They are, whatever lengths they or we will go to forget it, people—individuals with families rooted in a given society.”⁶⁰ The Chechen women who have become suicide bombers have been living in conditions of absolute poverty and desolation—both physical and psychic—and their acts of terrorism can be seen as the last gestures of an extreme desperation. But we cannot forget that these gestures are also immoral acts of violence that maimed and killed others who were, like the female bombers themselves, “ordinary civilians.”⁶¹

Just as “we” refuse to negotiate with terrorists—just as we withhold, in other words, the gift of welcoming through language—“they” also refuse to welcome us through language, and instead, write their suicide letters on our collective body with their weapons and render us incapable of returning anything to them except our hatred, which they do not stay to receive. But our understanding of these women, if we are willing to embark on such a project, will have to begin with an understanding of the general perception of them, grounded in the order of the *symbolic*, as monsters. As Jeffrey Cohen reminds us, the monster’s body is always a cultural body: “The monster is born . . . as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster’s body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence.”⁶² In his “seven theses toward understanding cultures through the monsters they bear,” Cohen argues that the monster always embodies difference writ large (usually along lines that are sexual, racial, and cultural), and “the boundaries between personal and national bodies blur” in the body of the monster, which always threatens “to fragment the delicate matrix of relational systems that unite every private body to the public world.”⁶³ The female Chechen suicide bombers are especially troubling in this scenario because they bring together in their cultural bodies two “signs” that have traditionally terrified through their Otherness: “woman” and “nonwhite” (what Cohen terms, following two popular horror films from the 1950s, *She* and *Them!*).⁶⁴

Also central to the issue of what might be called the troubling, yet intimate alterity of these women is the name given to them, as a collectivity, by the Russian government and broadcast widely by the international press: they are the “black widows” of Chechnya—that is to say, they are the actual widows (the wives, yes, but also the mothers, sisters, and daughters) of men killed in an ongoing war with Russia that has claimed over 100,000 lives; they are also venomous black widow spiders who kill with one bite. Apparently, the Chechen women first earned this moniker during the rebel takeover of the Dubrovka Theater when they were seen on Russian TV wearing black hijabs and explosive-laden belts.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the supposed leader of these women has been referred to as “Black Fatima,” a nickname that incorporates racial and religious fears.⁶⁶ They are therefore both intimately familiar, yet also monstrously Other, and it is precisely because of their intimacy—because they are, ultimately, *like us*—that they drive us to the language of exteriority: we say that they are inhuman, and even monstrous, and their acts, evil and unspeakable. We say, in as many ways as we can, *they are not like us*.

According to Cohen, the monster resides in the “marginal geography of the Exterior, beyond the limits of the Thinkable, a place that is doubly dangerous:

simultaneously 'exorbitant' and 'quite close.'"⁶⁷ The female Chechen terrorists are strange to many Russians (and even to some Chechens), yet also lie very close to the heart of what Russia is—a state that originated and maintains its hegemonic authority with violence against persons and groups of people who do not possess equivalent force: they are Levinas's "isolated and heroic being[s]," whom the State produces by its "virile virtues"—and therefore, it will never be a matter of simply driving them back to the wilderness from which they supposedly came, nor of just destroying them (Russia's "official policy"). If the only policy against terrorists is to hunt them down and destroy—that is, to *kill*—them, without conversation, they will keep returning to us, bearing the gift of their deaths and our own murder. If we cannot approach these figures except as monsters, as *inhuman*, as *illegible*, then we cannot embark on what Levinas calls the "absolute adventure" of pluralistic being, which is peace itself, but only when we understand that peace "cannot be identified with the end of combats that cease for want of combatants, by the defeat of some and the victory of the others, that is, with cemeteries or future universal empires. Peace must be my peace, in a relation that starts from an I and goes to the other, in desire and goodness, where the I both maintains itself and exists without egoism."⁶⁸ But this kind of desiring, which requires that we turn our home (our recollection of ourselves-to-ourselves) into a kind of wandering that allows us to meet and welcome the stranger-Other and even behold her—behold the face of Zulikhan Elikhadzhiyeva—on the plane of the expression of her most enraged and suicidal being, currently exceeds our grasp. It is almost too much to ask. And yet, by her death, she both demands and escapes our attention.

That Terrible and Splendidly Made Spectacle

To Derrida's question regarding how Levinas's ethics of hospitality might be regulated in a juridical practice, or whether or not it could give rise to the law, early English law codes, such as those of Ine, Alfred, and Æthelstan, demonstrate some of the ways in which the figure of the stranger, or lordless man, held a prominent place in the juridical system of Anglo-Saxon England. In the law codes of Alfred (871–899) drafted after the treaty with Guthrum in 886 (referred to as the Danelaw), and modified by Edward the Elder (Alfred's successor, 899–924), it is stipulated that

Gif man gehadodne oððe ælðeodigne þurh enig ðing forræde æt féo oððe æt feore, þonne sceal him cyng beon—oððan eorl ðær on lande—7 bisceop ðere þeode for mæg 7 for mundboran, buton he elles oðerne hæbbe; 7 bete man georne be ðam þe seo dæd sy Criste 7 cyninge, swa hit gebyrige; oððe þa dæde wrece swiðe deope þe cyning sy on ðeode.

[If any attempt is made to deprive in any wise a man in orders, or a stranger, of either his goods or his life, the king—or the earl of the province—and the bishop of the diocese shall act as his kinsmen and protectors, unless he has some other. And such compensation as is due shall be promptly paid to Christ and the king according to the nature of the offence; or the king within whose dominions the deed is done shall avenge it to the uttermost.]⁶⁹

In the early English law codes in general (beginning with the seventh-century laws of Ine and extending through the eleventh-century reign of Cnut) the stranger is most often referred to as *ældæodigne* [alien person] or *feorcumen man* [man who comes from afar; foreigner], and occasionally the word *gest* [guest] is also used, with the term *gestliðnesse* [literally 'guestliness'] denoting "hospitality." Clearly, the displaced person without specific kinship or local group connections held a special status within Anglo-Saxon England, and Alfred's law, cited above, could even be said to denote a space of legal welcoming of (and hospitality for) the displaced person into the domestic kin-dwelling and protection of the state. In the law codes of Cnut (1020–23) we can even see the codification of a *moral* concern for the treatment of strangers, where it states that "he who pronounces a worse judgment on a friendless man or a stranger from a distance than on his own fellows, injures himself."⁷⁰

But in the law codes of Æthelstan (924–939), we can see how the legal welcoming and protection of the stranger also belies a fear of the individual who is too foreign, too displaced, or too unwilling to be attached to the state through a locally circumscribed domicile:

Ond we cwædon be þam hlafordleasan mannum, ðe mon nán ryht ætbegytan ne mæg, þæt mon beode ðære mægpe, ðæt hi hine to folcrynhte gehamette 7 him hlaford finden on folcgemote. 7 gif hi hine ðonne begytan nyllen oððe ne mægen to þam andagan, ðonne beo he syþþan flyma, 7 hine lecge for ðeof se þe him tocome.

[And we have declared respecting those lordless men from whom no law may be obtained, that the kin should be commanded to domicile him to common law, and find for him a lord in the district meeting. And if they will not or cannot produce him at the appointed day, then he is afterwards a fugitive outlaw, and let anyone slay him for a thief who can come at him.]⁷¹

Even earlier, in the law codes of Ine (688–725), we can see that the status of the foreigner was ultimately precarious:

Gif feorcund mon oððe fremde butan wege geond wudu gonge 7 ne hrieme ne horn blawe, for ðeof he bið to profianne, oððe to sleanne oððe to áleisanne.

[If a man from afar, or a stranger, travels through a wood off the highway and neither shouts nor blows a horn, he shall be assumed to be a thief, and as such may be either slain or put to ransom.]⁷²

The line separating the sacred foreigner whose body and possessions should be protected from the person who is *available to be killed* (by anyone, no less) precisely because he either does not signify his presence or refuses the invitation into the state's dwelling is very tenuous here. One could say that all of the law codes cited above are predicated, in the final analysis, upon the state's desire both to regulate and contain immigrants and disenfranchised persons (as well as eliminate them when they cannot be contained), and also to profit from them through fees of protection and taxation. The "fate of the foreigner in the Middle Ages—and in many respects also today," as Julia Kristeva has written, "depended on a subtle, sometimes brutal, play between *caritas* and the *political jurisdiction*."⁷³

Anglo-Saxon law codes point to a legally codified ethics of care for the stranger-Other who is both threatened yet also threatening in his singularity, and they

likely arise from a society that we know, from its imaginative and other literature, was deeply concerned with what might be called the protocols of hospitality.⁷⁴ And these protocols—in the absence of the law, or beyond the law's reach—functioned as the important means whereby those who were Other to each other could communicate, without hostility, in spaces of *common dwelling*, whose doors, whether barred or open, marked the threshold between the “inside” of the communal dwelling from the “outside” of the stateless forest. Importantly, the very idea of the extralegal was enclosed within the Anglo-Saxon legal definition of the fugitive as one who was *exlex*, or *utlah* [outlaw]. According to Michael Moore, “The forest was the proper haunt for such figures, ranging far from the houses and protection of the village. No food or lodging was to be offered to the *utlah*.” Further, “These criminals, conceived of as demonic creatures outside the boundaries of humanity, were pushed away from the society, absolutely excluded from the shelter of the community and its legal world and suffering what amounted to ‘civil death.’”⁷⁵ In medieval Ireland and Iceland, “the term ‘wolf’ was applied to any dangerous foreigner who did not belong to the local community. Wolfishness was also thought to be an attribute of the medieval outlaw, who was deemed to become wolf-like,” demonstrating that to exist outside the law, or outside of the known domicile of a particular kin group with specific connections to the state, was to be considered non-human, even monstrous.⁷⁶ As Moore writes, “Such acts of exclusion helped to form the community as a legal subject: the law was made by and for the village or kingdom, at the same time enclosing and defining it” and “the concept of outlawry was fundamental to establishing the inner, safe circle of communal law and royal power.”⁷⁷ The medieval social community, then, had need of an extralegal “outside” in order to define itself as *bounded*, while, at the same time, because of certain moral imperatives, rooted either in Christian belief or more archaic rituals of hospitality, and also for the purposes of strengthening its numbers (both human and economic), that community also had to leave a door open for the welcome of the stranger-Other.

In the realm of Old English poetry, as Hugh Magennis tells us, a “concern with ideas of community and of the relationship of individuals to communities is widely evident.” Further, Old English poetic texts often “raise unsettling questions” about “received notions of community,” which are reflected in the antithesis between the corpus’s positive images of “warmth and security,” especially of feasting and drinking in secular halls, and the reverse images of “dislocation and alienation,” as we get in *Seafarer*, *Wanderer*, and *The Ruin*.⁷⁸ The Anglo-Saxon hall—both real and poetic—is an especially conflicted site, as both tribal seat and the *civitas* (or state) itself, for it is not only the place where a community gathers, happily and in supposed concord, around a meal and drink, but is also “the seat of business, of political brokering and conflicts, where power . . . [is] exercised.”⁷⁹

Themes of authority and the betrayal of that authority are, fittingly enough, often played out in the hall, and this is especially so in *Beowulf*, where the poet describes Heorot at one point as “filled with friends within” who do not, “as yet practice treachery” (1017–19). One could argue that the gestures of welcoming in *Beowulf*, which are clearly the primary instrument of the ethico-politics of the world of the story—from the coast guard’s welcome of Beowulf and his men into Daneland (lines 237–57, 287–300, and 316–19), to Hrothgar’s servant’s welcome of them into Heorot itself (lines 333–39), to Hrothgar’s initial welcome of Beowulf

(lines 457–90), to Wealhtheow's bearing of the banquet feast cup to Beowulf after he has killed Grendel (lines 1216–31), to Hygelac's re-welcoming of Beowulf into Geatland (lines 1975–98)—are all fraught with the anxiety and tension that always arises when ideas of sovereignty (whether of the individual, the family/tribe, or the larger polis-state) come up against an ethics of hospitality that is supposed to transcend those sovereignties. So, for example, when Beowulf returns to Hygelac's court after his adventures in Daneland, Hygelac commands his hall to be cleared for the “foot-guests” [*feðgestum*] (1976) to whom he offers “earnest words” [*meaglum wordum*] and cups of mead [*meoduscencum*] (1980), one of which his daughter bears directly to Beowulf (1981–83). Yet Hygelac also reminds Beowulf that he had “mistrusted” his adventure [*side ne truwode*] (1994) all along and had asked Beowulf to “let the South-Danes themselves make war with Grendel” [*lete Suð-Dene sylfe geweorðan / guðe wið Grendel*] (1996–97). By letting Beowulf know of his *not having faith* in Beowulf, Hygelac opens up a line of tension within his rewelcoming *home* of the local hero, who clearly understands the challenge (and possible peril) of not properly receiving Hygelac's hospitality, when he concludes his story of his exploits in Hrothgar's country by telling Hygelac,

“...ac he me (maðma)s geaf,
 sunu Healfdenes on (min)ne sylfes dom;
 ða ic ðe, beorcnyning, bringan wylle,
 estum geywan. Gen is eall æt ðe
 lissa gelong; ic lyt hafo
 heafodmaga nefne, Hygelac, ðec.” (2146–51)

[“...but he gave treasures to me,
 the son of the Half-Danes, according to my own judgment,
 that I to you, king of men, wish to bring,
 to bestow willingly. On you, still, is all
 joy dependent; I have few
 near relations, Hygelac [except for] you.”]

In other words, Beowulf has to reassure Hygelac, through his hospitable (and loving) language and his gifts, where his loyalties as a warrior (and citizen of Hygelac's Geatland) ultimately lie.

In the case of Wealhtheow, as the wife of Hrothgar and hostess of the table of the Danish hall, it is her duty to give to Beowulf, following Grendel's defeat, both wine and gifts, and to wish him good health and prosperity, and she does so, but not without also voicing her concern that Beowulf will always be kind in deeds to her sons [*Beo þu suna minum / dædum gedefe*] (1226b–27a). Wealhtheow's anxiety over her sons' future may very well be predicated upon her fear that her husband has gone too far in *his* hospitality and gratitude by having already spoken of Beowulf as a son [*sunu*] in his mind [*ferþe*] to whom he would give everything he is able to give (946b–50). Hospitality, then, is not just a form of charity in this world, but is also a type of politics—a politics, moreover, that has its breakable limits, evidenced by the poem's multiple digressions into stories about violence erupting in the very site of reception that makes hospitality possible at all: the hall itself. Therefore, in both the story of Hengest and Finn, told by Hrothgar's *scop* after Beowulf has defeated Grendel (1071–1159a), and

also of the destruction of Heorot itself by the Heathobards, first foretold by the poet (81b–85) and then later retold with great embellishment by Beowulf himself (2032–69a), we hear about the murder of guests in the halls of their former enemies, who have invited them there to share food, drink, and gifts (including women exchanged as brides), ostensibly to smooth over past enmities—which enmities obviously percolate very close to the surface of the structures of hospitality designed to ameliorate them.

It is significant, I think, that Beowulf asks Hrothgar, when first arriving in Daneland to allow him to *cleanse*, or *purify*, Heorot [*Heorot fælsian*] (432b), the great hall of the Danes, which has been the chief object of Grendel's attacks.⁸⁰ No hospitality (or politics) is possible while Heorot is polluted with the blood of Hrothgar's subjects, many of whom have also abandoned the hall to sleep (and therefore, to reside) elsewhere (138–43), meaning that not only the hall itself, but also the space of sovereignty it marks, has been deserted. The Danish community, thanks to Grendel's relentless violence, has no viable or pure center, no gleaming building with which to signify their supposedly generous hearts.⁸¹ But even without Grendel's desecration of Daneland's chief ceremonial and communal space, as the poem makes clear again and again in all of its asides regarding the feuds between Frisians and Danes, Danes and Heathobards, Geats and Swedes, and so forth, it is the men themselves who stain the floors of their halls with each other's blood and also burn the structures of their communities down to the ground. As a result, the poem keeps in perpetual motion what Levinas defined as one of the more distressing tasks of alterity: defining "who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust."⁸²

In his terrifyingly excessive hostility, which the poet describes often as a form of hatred [*nīð*, which can also mean 'envy,' 'terror,' 'evil,' and 'spite,' among a great many other connotations in the corpus],⁸³ Grendel is the signifier of a politics that transgresses the state, through terror, and thereby *transfixes its gaze*.⁸⁴ Grendel's violence challenges the code of hospitality that founds Hrothgar's great hall (and by extension, the whole jural feud society of Daneland),⁸⁵ while it simultaneously expresses a kind of excess of the very same violence that helped build that hall, for Hrothgar's "wide" reputation and the wealth of his court are the chief byproducts of his and his troops' "success in war" and "honor in battle" [*heresped and wiges weorðmynd*] (64, 65). And because Grendel's seemingly senseless aggression encloses a kind of unconscious insistence on his own murder as the only possible end to that aggression, Grendel refuses conversation with Hrothgar and his Danes, and with Beowulf and his Geats, and thereby forcefully opens a way out of his solitude onto the plane of a certain futurity, which is the plane of his own death, but also of a history beyond the judgment (or *sense*) of those who would "translate" him into a battle trophy.

In that moment when Beowulf and his Geats return to Hrothgar's court with Grendel's severed head, which they have to drag by its hair across the floor of the great hall [*be feaxe on flet boren / Grendles heafod*] (1647–48), the "terrible" and "splendidly-made spectacle" [*egeslic and wliteseon wrætlīc*] (1649, 1650) of that head, upon which everyone gazes, is a marvel of alterity that, similar to the face of Zulikhan Elikhadzhiyeva, "gleams like a splendor but does not deliver itself."⁸⁶ Seth Lerer has argued that Beowulf's killing of Grendel can be viewed as a "rite of purification" or "sacrificial act" by which Heorot is "cleansed"

[*gefælsod*] (1176), with the return of Grendel's severed head to Heorot serving as the "token" or "sign" [*tacne*] (1654) of that purification. Further, by delivering Grendel *in parts*, the monster's body "may remain as parts, safe in their symbolism and inactivity."⁸⁷ But I would argue that there is something not completely benign or inert in the spectacle of Grendel's head being dragged across the floor of Heorot, and whether it is tied to the rafter beams or left on its slaughter-pole [*uælstenge*] (1638), in the words of Jeffrey Cohen, "it smears the formal structure of the symbolic network with its obscene presence—its pleasures, delights, and destructions."⁸⁸ Further, as Carolyn Anderson writes, "the banishment of Grendel and his Mother does not rid the world of Heorot or *Beowulf* of disruptions. The object (repressed) persistently encroaches on and disrupts the symbolic order, so that the subject is always in process, on trial, and always insecure about the boundaries of identity."⁸⁹

Prior to their violent ends at the hands of Beowulf, Grendel, a "grim ghost" [*grimma gæst*] (102), and his mother, a "mighty mere-wife" and "sea-wolf" [*mere-wif mihtig and brimwylf*] (1519, 1599), live in the landscape that is wild and supposedly unlivable, yet is also situated at the very margin, or border, of the so-called civilized world—specifically, Daneland, whose chief symbol, Heorot, is upheld by the poet as the "best of all houses" [*husa selest*] (146). Because Daneland's primary symbol, the hall, is architectural—it is a thing made and built by human design and therefore articulates human identity—it stands in stark contrast to the fen paths, dark headlands, and burning mere that mark the monsters' territory (1357–72). One could argue that the hall is not just a metonymy for Daneland (and for its authority), but is, in fact, Daneland itself, for the poet shares no details regarding any village or cultivated fields, or other outlying areas that would surely have attached to such a monumental seat of political and cultural power. There is something peculiar about this glittering and golden world whose light shines over many lands [*lixe se leoma ofer landa fela*] (311): the only things that really constitute Daneland are the shore that separates it from the rest of the world, the horn-gabled hall, the paved stone road leading to and away from the hall, the blood and flesh-splattered trail that leads to the monsters' mere, and the outland territories of the monsters who are "out there" somewhere,⁹⁰ calling to mind, again, Jeffrey Cohen's argument that the monster resides "in that marginal geography of the Exterior, beyond the limits of the Thinkable, a place that is doubly dangerous, simultaneously 'exorbitant' and 'quite close.'"⁹¹ Similar to the world evoked in *King Lear*, in which there are really only two places—the inside of the houses of degenerate power and the outside with its "all-shaking Thunder" and "Houseless heads"—*Beowulf*'s world is partitioned between a sick and ruined *civitas* and a menacing wilderness.

Grendel is the chief border-crosser between these two worlds—a "fiend from hell" [*feond on helle*] (101) who has spent twelve winters crafting crimes [*fyrene fremman*] (101) against Heorot, he is not only Daneland's chief terror, but also its chief terrorist. The descriptions of Grendel within the poem reveal both his inherent unknowability as well as his intimate familiarity, which both fascinates and frightens. He is a "powerful ghost" [*ellengæst*] (86), a "giant" [*eoten*] (761), a "dark death-shadow" [*deorc deapscua*] (160), a "soul killer" [*gastbona*] (177), a "secret hatemonger" [*deogol dædhata*] (275), a "hell-secret" [*helrunan*] (164), and perhaps most importantly, because it is repeated so often, a "terror," or "one who

plays with [or fights] the law” [*aglæca*] (159, 425, 433, 592, 646, 732, 739, 816, 989, 1000, and 1269).⁹² Although Grendel is definitively strange and monstrous, the poet also tells us that he and his mother are descended from Cain (104–14, 1260–68), and therefore they share a human kinship with the other characters in the poem, while also bearing the mark of Cain’s pathology.⁹³ As Ruth Melinkoff reminds us,

Grendel and his mother not only are plainly fleshly creatures but also clearly are more human than beast. Although the poet was sparing with physical descriptions, he provides some vividly revealing details: arms and shoulders (835a, 972a and 1537a), claw-like hands (746–8a and 983b–90), a light shining from Grendel’s eyes (726b–7) and his head dragged by the hair (1647–8a).... Evil monsters, yes, but with human forms, flesh and minds.⁹⁴

Although Grendel never speaks within the poem, and therefore could be construed by the Geats and Danes as being bereft of a rational or human consciousness, the poet refers often to his mental states. As Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe has pointed out, when Grendel first approaches Beowulf after bursting into Heorot in the dead of night, “he is angry (‘[ge]bolgen,’ l. 723; ‘yrremod,’ l. 726), his heart laughs (‘mod ahlog,’ l. 730), he shows intent (‘mynte,’ l. 731), and he thinks (‘þohte,’ l. 739).”⁹⁵ More to the point of Grendel’s troublingly intimate exteriority,⁹⁶ he is simultaneously the “elsewhere ghost” [*ellorgæst*] (807), “fierce house-guard” [*repe renweardas*] (770), and the “hateful hall-thane” [*healdægnes hete*] (142) whom Hrothgar calls “my invader” [*ingenga min*] (1776), pointing to his intertwined status with those who lie sleeping in the hall at night, and whom he kills and ingests during his visits there. It would appear that somehow, if even on an unconscious level, Hrothgar recognizes that Grendel is somehow his and the Danes’ personal nightmare, and even the poet mentions, at lines 152 and 154–55, that Grendel “had fought for a long time against Hrothgar” and “wanted no peace with any man of the Danish troop.” So, while on the one hand the Danes can claim not to know or understand Grendel, part of his ability to terrify them might be partly rooted in Hrothgar’s recognition that somehow and in some way, Grendel’s violence is recognizable as a kind of *death-shadow* of the very same violence that founded his own hall and might also have a more materially palpable cause that attaches to specific persons or specific places.

That Grendel’s feud with Hrothgar’s court is personal, and that its original cause might somehow be rooted in Daneland’s ostentatious display of its wealth and power in its most visible articulation—the golden keep of Heorot itself—is evidenced in the lines, early in the poem, that Grendel “sorrowfully endured his time in the darkness, [and] suffered distress, when he heard each day the loud rejoicing in the hall, the music of the harp, and the clear song of the poet” [*earfoðlice / þrage gepolode, se þe in þystrum bad, / þæt he dogora gewham dream gehyrde / hludne in healle; þær wæs hearpan sweg, / swutol sand scopes*] (86–90). One of the reasons Grendel may be particularly angry about this music is the subject matter of the song itself—God’s creation of the world (91–98)—for Grendel, as one of the deformed or “harm-shaped” creatures spawned by Cain, likely has a special grievance with God, and also with any men, like Hrothgar and his Danes, who appear to have been blessed by God. One visible sign of this blessing, aside from

the Danes' material wealth, is the fact that, as the poet tells us in lines 168–69, because of God, Grendel could not approach or touch Hrothgar's "gift-seat," nor could he "know" God's "mind" or "love."⁹⁷ Although the poet does not say so directly, we can assume that Grendel assumes that he is not, never was, and never will be welcome in the hall and the field of un-welcoming that the hall radiates might be part of what undergirds his rage against the Danes who do not (and will not) recognize him as being part of their world such that they could even fathom the *idea* of welcoming him as a stranger-guest. Perhaps, too, Grendel simply hates all who are foreign *to him* and recognizes no sovereignty except his own, which sovereignty, moreover, he asserts through the elimination of all others whom he perceives to be *in his way*. This raises the question, too, of how Levinas's unconditional hospitality can ever be possible in a world that has need of the idea (and force) of sovereignty.

When Beowulf first arrives in Daneland and is explaining to the coast guard why he is there, as mentioned above, he reveals that he and his men have heard of this "unknown malevolence" [*uncuðne nið*] (276) that threatens the country of the Scyldings, and he wishes to offer Hrothgar counsel as to how he might vanquish this "I don't know what kind of ravager" [*sceaðona ic nat hwylc*] (274). It could be argued that it is not fair to say that the Danes have not properly recognized Grendel as belonging, in some fashion, to their world (if even as a type of structural excess), for Grendel stands in stark contrast to more identifiable human enemies—the Frisian or Heathobard who has been invited to dinner and is quietly seething over old grudges, and whose killing sword is always close at hand. These are enemies whose worst motives are understood and even anticipated. Yet it is precisely this more familiar enemy that Beowulf identifies as the ultimate cause of the undoing of Heorot when he returns to Geatland and explains his adventures in Daneland to Hygelac. In other words, it is other *men*, familiar family members even, and not Grendel, who are Heorot's real threat.

In his speech, lines 2000–162, which constitutes a second telling of his exploits (the first having been already given to us by the poet), Beowulf, either through an amazing prescience or a smart reading of social cues he witnessed while at Hrothgar's court, explains to Hygelac that Heorot will eventually be destroyed by a failed alliance with an old enemy, the Heathobards, through an arranged marriage between Hrothgar's daughter, Freawaru, and Ingeld, the son of Froda, chief of the Heathobards. Indicating to Hygelac that these kinds of alliances rarely hold, Beowulf states, "Often, after the fall of princes, in a short while the deadly spear flies, even if the bride is good" [*Oft seldan hwær / æfter leodhryre lytle hwile / bongar bugeð, þeah seo bryd dugu*] (2029–31). In a strikingly creative moment, Beowulf then imagines the marriage dinner itself, still in the future, when the Heathobards will welcome the Danes into *their* hall to celebrate the wedding and, for all their good intentions, will eventually be galled by the sight of all the Danes in their glittering ring-mail, which they wrested from the dead bodies of the Heathobards on the battlefield (2032–40). Because the desire for vengeance always wins out over the desire for reconciliation (and even sex), violence naturally erupts, regardless of the protocols of hospitality that have been designed to avoid (or at least dull) such violent impulses.⁹⁸

The poem speaks often of these seemingly ceaseless cycles of tribal violence and their horrific aftermath—the image of Hildeburh, in the Finn and Hengest story,

watching as the heads of her son and brother melt as they are being consumed on their funeral pyre, their blood bursting from the gashes in their bodies (1120b–22a), is a signature moment in this respect—but many of the characters do possess some prescience about this cycle, and they even have social codes to contain it somewhat.⁹⁹ Some might argue, then, that Grendel is still worse than these familiar enemies because he represents an obdurately opaque type of mythical or archaic violence that will always be worse than anything the men can do to each other.¹⁰⁰ More terrifying still, he cannot be fought with conventional weapons. When Beowulf requests that Hrothgar allow him to fight Grendel, he mentions that he has heard that Grendel, “in his dark thoughtlessness, does not care for weapons” [*for his wonhyðum wæpna ne recceð*] (434), and therefore Beowulf resolves to fight him without sword and shield (437–40). Further, when Beowulf and Grendel are struggling together in hand-to-hand combat in Heorot, and Beowulf’s men rush to defend Beowulf with their “ancestral swords” [*ealde lafe*] (795), the poet tells us that

Hie þæt ne wiston, þa hie gewin drugon,
heardhicgende hildemecgas,
ond on healfa gehwone heawan þohton,
sawle secan: þone synscaðan
ænig ofer eorðan irenna cyst,
guðbilla nan gretan nolde;
ac he sigewæpnum forsworen hæfde,
ecga gehwylcre. (798–805).

[They did not know, when they began the fight,
hard-minded warriors,
thinking to swing [their swords] in every direction,
to seek his soul, that [not any of] the best of iron blades,
of any over the earth, nor any war-sword,
could greet that sin-shadow,
for he had forsworn battle weapons,
all sword-edges.]

Additionally, when Beowulf cuts off the head of Grendel’s dead body with the ancient giant sword [*eald sweord eotenisc*] (1558) he finds hanging on the wall of Grendel’s mother’s cave (and with which he has also killed Grendel’s mother), the poet tells us that the blade of the sword burned up and melted due to Grendel’s “too hot” blood (1615–17), indicating, once again, the difficulty of penetrating Grendel’s body with conventional weapons. Ultimately, Grendel does not answer to standard forms of combat, which we can imagine contributes to his ability to terrorize. In this respect, Grendel appears to be pure, menacing alterity: he does not walk, talk, or fight “straight.”

While Hrothgar and his Danes and Beowulf and his Geats view Grendel and his mother as thoroughly Other than themselves, as Carol Braun Pasternack has pointed out, the language in the poem often belies the lines of difference that supposedly separate the men from the monsters, and thereby also reveals what might be called the poem’s “political unconscious”:

Aglæca characterizes Grendel and the dragon and aglæcwif Grendel’s mother,
but aglæca also characterizes Sigemund (893a), both Beowulf and the dragon

together (2592) and, in two instances, ambiguously either Beowulf or his monstrous opponent, in the first possibly Grendel (739a) and in the second possibly mere-monsters (1512a). Klaeber struggles in his glossary to keep a clear distinction between hero and opponent, identifying the same term as, on the one hand, “wretch, monster, demon, fiend,” and on the other, “warrior, hero.” But, as George Jack recognizes in his edition, “fierce assailant” indicates the common ground for all the referents.¹⁰¹

Further, Pasternack explains that “The *aglæcan* are also *wreccan*, and this word and etymologically related terms point even more clearly to an oral-heroic paradigm in which hero and opponent fall within a single concept, the fierce outsider.”¹⁰² O’Keeffe has also remarked that the significance of the term *rinc* [man; warrior] as it is applied to Grendel “is underscored by the number of the times the poet uses the word as a simplex or as part of a compound in the . . . description of Grendel’s actions in the hall [when he fights Beowulf]. ‘Rinca manige’ (l. 728), ‘magorinca heap’ (l. 730), ‘slæpende rinc’ (l. 741), and finally of Beowulf himself, ‘rinc on ræste’ (l. 747), confirm Grendel’s connection with the men in the hall.”¹⁰³

Perhaps what is most troubling to the Danes is not Grendel’s status as either a monster or a man, so much as the seeming unstoppable and *unknowable* trajectory of his bloody incursions into Heorot. Early on in the poem, the poet notes that Grendel’s feud with the Danes was perpetual, that he would never make peace with any Danish man, he would not consent to settle the feud in any manner or by any payment, and he was not regretful about his murders (136, 152–58), all of which give to Grendel the status of an unknown horror who comes, again (geographically, tribally, mentally), from “I know not where.” In this sense, it is not possible for Grendel to attain the status of even *the man who comes from afar* (such as a Beowulf) or *alien person*, which would, perhaps, make him worthy of some kind of welcoming, for not only his place (or tribe) of origin but also the causes of his hatred are completely unknown to the characters within the poem. But I would argue that this reading of Grendel belies what Hrothgar himself tells Beowulf about who Grendel is and where he comes from. Because it is only the poet who tells us that Grendel and his mother are descended from Cain (and this happens in two definitive instances at lines 102–14 and 1260–68), and therefore it is only the poet who acknowledges Grendel’s genealogical link to the human world, it is important, I think, to look closely at how Grendel’s chief enemy, Hrothgar, describes and perceives him. A key passage for understanding this—perhaps *the* key passage—is the somewhat lengthy speech Hrothgar makes to Beowulf (1322–82) after Grendel’s mother has burst into Heorot and killed Æschere, Hrothgar’s most beloved warrior, rune-counselor, and shoulder-companion (1325–26).

First and foremost, it is clear that Hrothgar understands that the “hand-slayer” [*handbanan*] (1330) had a comprehensible motivation for her murder: “She revenged that feud when you [Beowulf], last night, killed Grendel” [*Heo þa fæde wræc, / þe þu gystran niht Grendel cwealdest*] (1333–34), and further, she “would avenge her kinsman” [*wolde hyre mæg wrecan*] (1339). At the same time, Hrothgar describes Grendel’s mother in somewhat oblique terms as a “wandering slaughter-host” [*wælgæst wæfre*] (1331) who goes “I know not where” [*ic ne wat hwæder*] (1331) with her plundered body. But then, in a striking reversal, Hrothgar shares with Beowulf some very specific details (albeit, borrowed from the hearsay of “land-holders among my people,” but also from counselors

[1345–46]) about who, exactly, Grendel and his mother are, and where they live. In what could even be called slightly excitable tones, Hrothgar explains that some people have seen “two similarly huge borderers, holding the moors, elsewhere ghosts” [*swylce tweġen / micle mearcstapan moras healdan, / ellorgæstas*] (1347–49), one of whom could “clearly” [*gewislicost*] (1350) be seen “shaped as a woman” [*idese onlicnæs*] (1351), and the other, “harm-shaped, tread the exile-path in the form of a man, although he was much bigger than any man” [*oðer earmsceapen / on weres wæstmum wræc-lastas træd, / næfne he wæs mara þonne ænig man oðer*] (1351–53). Most important, I think, is that Hrothgar knows this ghost has a name, Grendel (1354–55), and that he has no father—given that this is a world in which patrilineal succession is so important, one could argue that Grendel’s fatherlessness adds one more layer to his dimension of frightening and unsettling uncanniness, while at the same time, the assumption that he *should* have a father (and is strangely *lacking* one) denotes that he is believed to be, like the Danes, a kin-defined person, even a human being. Finally, in this same speech, even though Hrothgar claims that Grendel and his kinswoman “guard a secret land” [*Hie dygel lond / warigeað*] (1357–58), he then goes on, in shades of increasing hysteria, to describe in very precise detail this “wolf country”: there are fens, windy cliffs, mountain streams under dark bluffs, a flood under the earth, a lake with overhanging branches and frost-covered trees, and at night, strange fires on the water (1357–76).

In Hrothgar’s emotional speech to Beowulf, we see that the margins of the world in which the “monsters” live are sublimely secret and treacherous, yet also geographically recognizable (and therefore, navigable). Likewise, the monsters themselves, Grendel and his kinswoman, are both dark shadows, but also corporeally material and even human. It is fairly obvious, I would argue, that Hrothgar is afraid of the secret, yet familiar country in which Grendel and his mother live (otherwise, why hasn’t he already launched some kind of counter-offensive there, or traveled there himself to survey the obstacles?), perhaps because he realizes that the difference of this landscape is, as Cohen writes, “arbitrary and potentially free-floating, mutable rather than essential,”¹⁰⁴ just like the bodies of the monsters, or the bodies of the men who sleep within Heorot’s high walls. As René Girard has written, “Difference that exists outside the system is terrifying because it reveals the truth of the system, its relativity, its fragility, its mortality.”¹⁰⁵ Grendel’s and his mother’s anthrophagy is very apt in this scenario because it both absorbs the warrior’s body “into that big Other seemingly beyond (but actually wholly within, because wholly created by) the symbolic order that it menaces,”¹⁰⁶ and also disperses the warrior’s being, like so many pieces of flesh, into the wilderness (a kind of anti-Heorot, the space where no hospitality, no state, and no law is thought to be possible). In fact, one of the most terrifying sights for Beowulf and his men when they seek out Grendel’s mother in her underwater den is the spectacle of Æschere’s head sitting on a cliff beside the burning and blood-swelled waters of the mere (1417–21). Later, when he returns home, Beowulf tells Hygelac how upset the Danes were that they could not properly burn Æschere’s body on a funeral pyre (2124–26). The memory of Æschere’s body having been both ingested and also discarded, almost as trash, along the tracks of the stateless forest, serves as a frightening rebuke to the idea that anyone could ever be safe, *at home*, from the enemy.

By leasing Beowulf, as it were, to destroy Grendel and his ilk, Hrothgar is admirably doing everything he can to stop terror from enveloping and decimating his culture, to be sure, although it does raise the difficult question, again, of the difference “between, *on the one hand*, the force that can be just, or in any case deemed legitimate (not only an instrument in the service of the law but the practice and even the realization, the essence of *droit*), and *on the other hand* the violence that one always deems just.”¹⁰⁷ Grendel is so terrifying because, for the “hospitable” warrior-*polis* of Heorot, as Cohen writes, the “maintenance of order . . . is achieved only by the repression of those [murderous] impulses Grendel embodies,”¹⁰⁸ but which nevertheless were once necessary for the building of Heorot, which then becomes the “law” that keeps violence in check through its alliances, man-payments, diplomacy, and when necessary, controlled reprisal. But as Robert Gibbs notes, “the positivity of law depends on a singular [violent] event, a revolution or war,” as well as upon the reiteration of that violence through the coercion that preserves the maintenance of the state.¹⁰⁹ And what always puts the law in question (or peril) is the stranger-Other, such as a Grendel, for whom conformity is out of the question and whose violence appears to have no boundaries. Cohen writes that “Grendel represents a cultural Other for whom conformity to societal dictates is an impossibility because those dictates are not comprehensible to him; he is at the same time a monsterized version of what a member of that very society can become when those dictates are rejected, when the authority of leaders or mores disintegrates and the subordination of the individual to hierarchy is lost. Grendel is another version of the *wrecca* or *anhaga*, as if the banished speaker of *The Wanderer* had turned in his exile not to elegaic poetry but to the dismemberment of the cultural body through which he came to be.”¹¹⁰ Levinas’s hospitality, of course, would not be able to succeed within any model of conformity; indeed, it depends on the appearance and welcoming of the non-conformist.

Ultimately, Grendel reserves for himself the privilege of murder that, typically, only the state (Heorot) can authorize, and similar to the suicide bomber who can never be caught or punished because she is already dead (and there will always be another to die again in her place), Grendel holds the place of a primal, sacrificial violence to which the only response is either fear and resignation or the unleashing of a force of the state that operates outside of the usual laws, such as a Beowulf (who is a “special force”). Indeed, it is precisely in Beowulf’s “grappling” with Grendel in Heorot (745b–818a), when Heorot literally resounds with Grendel’s “wailing cry” [*wealle wop*] (785) as Beowulf is ripping Grendel’s arm and shoulder from his body, that we can glimpse the fluctuating structuration of violence that, tragically, has always undergirded this world.

According to Levinas, “The privileged role of the dwelling does not consist in being the end of human activity but in being its condition, and in this sense its commencement.”¹¹¹ Without the dwelling, what Levinas calls “recollection”—the “coming to oneself . . . which answers to a hospitality, an expectancy, a human welcome”—is not possible. It is not possible to know, of course, if the underwater mere where Beowulf meets Grendel’s mother in combat functioned, in that way, as Grendel’s dwelling. But because of what we can imagine to be Grendel’s belief that Heorot mocks him and even denies him welcoming access, and because his home—to which he drags himself to die after Beowulf has torn

his arm out of its socket—is designated ahead of time by the Danes as everything that is un-homelike, Grendel exists outside the state as the figure of the “extra-legal” and is beyond both his own and others’ “recollection.” Beowulf’s murder and postmortem decapitation of Grendel represents what might have been for Grendel a devastating double-dispossession, especially when we consider that Beowulf first drives Grendel out of the “high hall” that is the home of those who are supposedly blessed by a God whose regard Grendel cannot “know,” and then later, to add insult to injury, Beowulf desecrates Grendel’s body by slicing off his head in the “roofed hall” [*hrofsæle*] (1515) of his mother.¹¹² And this is a head that, tellingly, will take four men to haul it along the horse-path back to Heorot (1634–39), where, somewhat disturbingly, after being dragged across the floor to where the nobles are sitting on the benches, it becomes a spectacle for silent awe as well as a trophy (1647–50). The building of Heorot was made possible through the spoils of war, and Grendel’s severed head is the most visible marker of the monstrous, outsized rage necessary for founding that hall as well as the signifier of the violent coercion necessary for maintaining the law of the hall that, in the final analysis, is not predicated as much upon an ethics of hospitality as it is upon a force of exclusion that makes hospitality for *some* (as opposed to *all*) possible.

For the Danes, or even for Beowulf and his men, to even pause to consider how they might substitute for or subject themselves to a Grendel, to face him, as it were, without intermediary (Levinas’s *face-à-face sans intermédiaire*), would be to contemplate a justice that literally stands beyond the social totality (Heorot itself) that makes thinking possible. It would be to go “where no clarifying—that is, panaromic—thought precedes, in going without knowing where,” in order to grasp a “pluralism” that can never be totalized and without which peace can never be accomplished. It may be, as John Caputo has written of Derrida’s reflections on the possible politics that could be founded by Levinas’s hospitality, that “[u]nconditional hospitality requires a politics without sovereignty,” and also a “community without community, a city without walls, a nation without borders . . . where the decision procedure for administration is based on a holy undecidability between insider and outsider.” And what would result would be a type of “holy hell” that is “the stuff of sacred anarchy.”¹¹³ But how to imagine such an anarchic state of affairs into administrative being? Or, to put the question another way: surrounded by so many bad deaths, both in the poem but also in our own troubled times, how to make way, hopefully, for its shining and chaotic arrival?

Although Grendel can’t dine anymore on the beautiful, shining bodies of the Danes, cracking their bones and gulping them down in chunks, nor does the light, which the poet calls “unbeautiful” [*unfæger*] (727), any more shine through his eyes, his head, suspended in the hall in a moment of Anglo-Saxon time, can keep watching them.¹¹⁴ He can keep gaping and warning as what Levinas would have called, not a face, but a *façade* “whose essence is indifference, cold splendor, and silence.”¹¹⁵ Likewise, Æschere’s head, left behind along the cliff beside the burning lake where Grendel’s mother discarded it (1421), is also watching and warning. These, finally, are the faces of *Beowulf* that overflow the boundaries of all images and call into question the nature of the proper relationship of violence to justice, and to the sovereignty of the state. Along with the photograph of Zulikhan Elikhadzhiyeva, these “remains” are the expressions of persons

“brutally cast forth and forsaken in the world.”¹¹⁶ In addition to Heorot itself, once it is destroyed, they are also the “somewheres” of dwellings that can no longer open to themselves, but only to those of us who are willing to behold them, belatedly, with wonder.

Notes

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1. Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 21 and 25. For Derrida’s further development of the subject of hospitality, see *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).
2. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 39.
3. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 50 and 51.
4. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 51.
5. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 51 and 76.
6. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 168 and 172–73. For Levinas, hospitality is literally the “home open to the Other,” and it is the first condition for the encounter with the Other who calls the subject into question *in her own home*. On this point, see Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 168–74.
7. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 152.
8. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 156.
9. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 157 and 153–54.
10. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 155.
11. Emmanuel Levinas, “Substitution,” trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 105 [88–125]. To those who would criticize Levinas’s ethics as too abstract or even impossible (how, for example, can one person really be expected to submit themselves to a hostage-like *sub-jectum* to the entire universe?), we should keep in mind that Levinas was well aware of how “the little act of goodness [*la petite bonté*] from one person to his neighbor” is “the sole refuge of the good in being”; *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jill Robbins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 206 and 207. Goodness, then, is not accomplished all at once in the world when everyone is all of a sudden completely and unreservedly for-the-Other-before-themselves, but in those smaller singular moments when “the human interrupts the pure obstinacy of beings and its wars.” This goodness, which is “little” and passes from one person to another, as in that moment when a soldier gives comfort to the enemy by bringing him water or touching him gently, is ultimately “fragile before the power of evil,” and yet is the only means available for ethical attention since goodness can never be “a regime, an organized system, a social institution” (*Is It Righteous to Be?* pp. 207, 218, and 217).
12. Levinas, “Substitution,” pp. 107 and 104.

13. *Is It Righteous to Be?* p. 109. By “political” here, I mean to denote the term in its most broad sense as having something to do with what it means *to be together with others in the world*, whether that “togetherness” is rendered in political parties, local communities, and “tribes,” nation-states, various transnational organizations, such as the United Nations or NATO, or any arrangement whereby persons come together for the purposes of formulating and practicing a particular “politics” alongside one another. In a world increasingly taken over by various processes of “globalization”—political, cultural, economic, or otherwise—the term “political” is increasingly fraught with the anxiety of having to take into account sometimes overwhelming numbers of registers and networks of difference that cannot always be reconciled. At the same time, due to those very same differences that cannot always be reconciled, record numbers of persons are also under constant threat of annihilation, displacement, and horrors we can only even begin to imagine. In such a scenario, it may be that the imperative of Levinas’s moral philosophy is more pressing upon us than ever.
14. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 50.
15. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 20. It has to be admitted that Levinas’s philosophy may be inherently apolitical. As Richard Wolin writes, “Levinas’s quasi-mystical veneration of Otherness...resembles an ‘epiphany.’ But it is nearly impossible to translate an epiphany into meaningful political action. As an experience of transcendence, an epiphany cannot be made into an object of legislation”: “Heidegger Made Kosher,” *The Nation* 20 February 2006, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060220/wolin>. But I would also argue that the question of whether or not Levinas’s ethics of hospitality could ever found a law, or a state, is best left as an open question. Furthermore, if the question is not left open, certain political discourses, such as those centering upon international human rights, will have a much more narrow field of play.
16. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 48.
17. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 64.
18. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, pp. 70 and 71.
19. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, pp. 75–76.
20. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 300. Levinas used both *autrui* and *autre* in his writings, the first to denote “the personal other” and the second to denote “otherness in general, or alterity.” It has been the habit of his translators to use the uppercase “O” for the first (“Other”) and the lowercase “o” for the second (“other” or “otherness”).
21. Emmanuel Levinas, “The State of Caesar and the State of David,” trans. Roland Lack, in Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, p. 274 [268–77].
22. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 306. According to Derrida, Levinas’s idea of a politics that would be “beyond the State in the State” denotes a type of messianic politics that is “*beyond* the political, but *in* the political. Inclusion opened onto the transcendence that it bears, incorporation of a door [*porte*] that bears [*porte*] and opens onto the beyond of the walls and partitions framing it”: *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 76.
23. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 172.
24. The dating of *Beowulf*, as a work of either oral or textual art, or as some hybrid between the two, has a long and contentious history that I do not wish to address here. For the purposes of this essay, I assume a readership and composition date consistent with the most probable date of the unique extant manuscript itself, which everyone agrees is ca. 1000 CE. For those interested in debates over the dating of the poem, see Colin Chase, ed., *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Kevin Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1981), pp. 13–63; and

- Roy Michael Liuzza, "On the Dating of *Beowulf*," in *Beowulf: Basic Readings*, ed. Peter S. Baker (New York: Garland Press, 1995), pp. 281–302.
25. All citations of the poem are from Fr. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. with supplements (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1950). All translations are mine.
 26. John Michael, "Identity, Masochism, and the Democratic Intellectual in the War on Terror," *The Hedgehog Review* 9.1 (2007): 80 [71–80].
 27. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), pp. 73 and 79, and *Totality and Infinity*, p. 246.
 28. Emmanuel Levinas, "Diachrony and Representation," in *Time and the Other*, p. 107 [97–120].
 29. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 297.
 30. For more details regarding this story see "Suicide Bombers Hit Moscow Concert," *BBC News Online*, 5 July 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/Europe/3047386.stm>; "Two Moscow Concert Bombers Kill 14," *CNN.com*, 5 July 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/07/05/russia.blast/index.html>; Steven Eke, "Chechnya's Female Bombers," *BBC News Online*, 7 July 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3052934.stm>; and Steven Lee Meyers, "Female Suicide Bombers Unnerve Russians," *The New York Times*, 7 August 2003: A1.
 31. This source of the photograph of the body of Zulikhan Elikhadzhiyeva is unknown; I originally located it through an on-line Russian news source, but the page is no longer available.
 32. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 193.
 33. *Is It Righteous to Be?* p. 215.
 34. For an overview of incidents of female suicide terrorism in Russia, see "Woman Bomber Kills 14 in Chechnya," *CNN.com*, 14 May 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/05/14/chechnya.blast/index.html>; "Woman Kills 17 in Russia Bus Blast," *CNN.com*, 5 June 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/06/05/russia.bus/index.html>; Fred Weir, "Chechen Women Join Terror's Ranks," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 June 2003; "Chechnya's 'Black Widow' Bombers," *CNN.com*, 11 July 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/07/11/russia.black.widows/index.html>; Stephen Brown, "Russia's 'Black Widows,'" *FrontPageMagazine.com*, 25 July 2003, <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=9088>; Fareed Zakaria, "Suicide Bombers Can Be Stopped," *Newsweek*, 25 August 2003; "Inside the Mind of a 'Black Widow,'" *BBC News Online*, 4 September 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3081126.stm>; "Russians Look for 'Female Bomber,'" *CNN.com*, 9 December 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/12/09/russia.explosion/index.html>; "Explosions 'led to Russia crashes,'" *CNN.com*, 30 August 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/08/30/russia.planecrash/index.html>; "Moscow Suicide Bomber Kills 9," *CNN.com*, 31 August 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/08/31/russia.carblast/index.html>; Steven Lee Myers, "Suicide Bomber Kills 9 at Moscow Subway Station," *The New York Times*, 1 September 2004 and "From Dismal Chechnya, Women Turn to Bombs," *The New York Times*, 10 September 2004; "Russia's 'Black Widows' Wreak Terror," *CNN.com*, 2 September 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/Europe/09/01/russia.widows/index.html>; C.J. Chivers, "Russians Cite Porous Security in Terror Bombings of 2 Planes," *The New York Times*, 16 September 2004; C.J. Chivers and Steven Lee Meyers, "Insurgents Seize School in Russia and Hold Scores," *The New York Times*, 2 September 2004, and "250 Die as Siege at a Russian School Ends in Chaos," *The New York Times*, 4 September 2004.

35. Eke, "Chechnya's Female Bombers."
36. Myers, "Female Suicide Bombers Unnerve Russians" and "From Dismal Chechnya, Women Turn to Bombs"; and Tom Parfitt, "Meet Black Fatima—She Programmes Women to Kill," *Daily Telegraph, London*, 20 July 2003.
37. "Inside the Mind of a 'Black Widow.'"
38. Eke, "Chechnya's Female Bombers."
39. Myers, "Female Suicide Bombers Unnerve Russians."
40. Irina Zvigeskaya, an expert with the official Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, quoted in Weir, "Chechen Women Join Terror's Ranks."
41. Quoted in "Inside the Mind of a 'Black Widow.'"
42. Quoted in Weir, "Chechen Women Join Terror's Ranks."
43. Myers, "From Dismal Chechnya, Women Turn to Bombs."
44. Quoted in Brian Handewerk, "Female Suicide Bombers: Dying to Kill," *National Geographic.com*, 13 December 2004, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/12/1213_041213_tv_suicide_bombers.html. As to the question of the "normality" of suicide terrorism in general, Robert Pape has devoted an entire study to the question, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), where he concludes that "the uncomfortable fact is that suicide terrorists are far more normal than many of us would like to believe" (p. 211). In the case of the female Chechen suicide bombers, Pape allows that "[c]onditions of personal anomie may well have influenced some individuals to carry out suicide terrorist attacks" (p. 183). In other words, the fact that some of the female Chechen suicide bombers lost husbands and sons and brothers (etc.) in the wars with Russia, coupled with the fact that the province of Chechnya has been absolutely devastated—physically, socially, economically, etc.—by the wars with the Russian government, may have brought them to individual states of despair that might have made them more inclined to suicide for deeply personal (and not necessarily political) reasons.
45. See Susan B. Glasser and Peter Baker, "Putin, Bush Weigh New Unity against a 'Common Foe,'" *The Washington Post*, 13 September 2001.
46. See the Briefing Paper, "Worse than War: 'Disappearances' in Chechnya—A Crime against Humanity," *Human Rights Watch*, March 2005, <http://hrw.org/backgrounder/eca/chechnya0305/index.htm>. On the dismal human rights situation in Chechnya in general since 1999, see the series of reports collected in "Chechnya: Renewed Catastrophe," *Human Rights Watch*, 2006, <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/russia/Chechnya>; "Memorandum to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on the Human Rights Situation in Chechnya," *Human Rights Watch*, 18 March 2002, <http://www.hrw.org/un/unchr-chechnya.htm>; and Anna Politkovskaya, *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya*, trans. Alexander Burry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
47. "Executive Summary," in "Worse than War."
48. "A Systematic Pattern: Impunity," in "Worse than War."
49. See "Russia Buries Evidence of Atrocities," *Human Rights Watch*, 15 May 2001, http://hrw.org/English/docs/2001/05/15/russia119_txt.htm.
50. "Background: The Current Situation in Chechnya," in "Worse than War."
51. Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 19 and 9.
52. C.J. Chivers and Steven Lee Myers, "Insurgents Seize School in Russia and Hold Scores," *The New York Times*, 2 September 2004.
53. Quoted in Ian Fisher and Stuart R. Weisman, "U.S. Issues Blunt Warning to Besieged Fallujah Rebels," *The New York Times*, 24 April 2004.
54. Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" trans. Mary Quaintance, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6

- [3–67]. On the question of whether or not violence can ever be “a moral means even to just ends,” see also Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 236–52, and Robert Gibbs, “Philosophy and Law: Questioning Justice,” in *The Ethical*, ed. Edith Wyschogrod and Gerald P. McKenny (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 101–16.
55. It has to be noted that where suicide terrorism is a first resort, it is rightly to be condemned, and as Michael Ignatieff writes, it is also evil when it intentionally seeks “to make peaceful politics impossible” and targets unarmed civilians, “punishing them for their allegiance or ethnicity.” Further, this kind of terrorism “is an offense . . . against politics itself, against the practice of deliberation, compromise, and the search for nonviolent and reasonable solutions”: *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 110–11. In my view, the situation and actions of the female Chechen terrorists does not fit this description of terrorism as a “first resort,” because, for the most part, they have been victims of obscenely illegal acts of violence on the part of the Russian government that have gone above and beyond merely putting down a rebellion or punishing specific Chechen rebel groups for their extralegal activities. But I am also willing to admit that some will argue this point is debatable.
 56. See again, “Worse than War,” especially the section titled “A Systematic Pattern: Impunity,” regarding the futility of ordinary Chechen civilians reporting abuses and “disappearances,” which, nevertheless, hasn’t stopped them from trying.
 57. “‘Disappearances’ in Chechnya as a Crime against Humanity,” in “Worse than War.”
 58. See Myers, “Female Suicide Bombers Unnerve Russians.”
 59. See Meyers, “From Dismal Chechnya, Women Turn to Bombs” and “Explosions ‘led to Russia’s crashes,’” *CNN.com*, 30 August 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/08/30/russia.planecrash/index.html>.
 60. Christoph Reuter, *My Life Is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing*, trans. Helena Ragg-Kirkby (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 12.
 61. The question is also raised as to whether or not the female Chechen suicide terrorist, thanks to years of destruction to both her country and family, is someone who, bereft of the welcoming site of the home within which to recollect herself to herself, is always already lost to us. This is a question that will have to remain (painfully) open.
 62. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 4 [3–25].
 63. Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” pp. 10 and 12.
 64. Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” p. 15.
 65. Brown, “Russia’s ‘Black Widows.’”
 66. Parfitt, “Meet Black Fatima.”
 67. Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” p. 20.
 68. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 305 and 306.
 69. *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, ed. and trans. F.L. Attenborough (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 108 and 109.
 70. Quoted in *English Historical Documents, c. 500–1042*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, 2nd edn. (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 460.
 71. The Old English is here cited from *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, p. 129; the translation is mine.
 72. *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, pp. 42 and 43. Ine’s law echoes very closely the earlier law of the Kentish king Wiltred (ca. 690–725) that stipulates, “If a man

- from afar, or a stranger, quits the road, and neither shouts, nor blows a horn, he shall be assumed to be a thief, [and as such] may be either slain or put to ransom": *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, p. 31.
73. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 85.
 74. On this point, see Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
 75. Michael E. Moore, "Wolves, Outlaws, and Enemy Combatants," chapter 9 in this volume. Giorgio Agamben reminds us that "ancient Germanic law was founded on the concept of peace (*Fried*) and the corresponding exclusion from the community of the wrongdoer, who therefore became *friedlos*, without peace, and whom anyone was permitted to kill without committing homicide": *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 104.
 76. Moore, "Wolves, Outlaws, and Enemy Combatants."
 77. Moore, "Wolves, Outlaws, and Enemy Combatants."
 78. Magennis, *Images of Community*, pp. 1 and 3.
 79. Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 13.
 80. On the subject of Beowulf's "cleansing" of Heorot as an act of a purification of the "social self," see Seth Lerer, "Grendel's Glove," *English Literary History* 61 (1994): 738–41 [721–51].
 81. Early on in the poem the poet notes that Hrothgar commanded the building of Heorot as a place where he would "give to all, young and old, such as God gave to him" [*eall gedælan / geongum on ealdum, swylc him God sealed*] (71b–72).
 82. Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics and Politics," in Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, p. 294 [289–97].
 83. It is worth noting here, as well, that the Old English *nið* denotes a type of sexual defamation, usually implying male–male rape, in medieval Norwegian law codes. On this point, see Carol J. Clover, "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 373–75 [363–87].
 84. On the psychological operations of terror in association with the figure of Grendel in the poem, see Michael Lapidge, "Beowulf and the Psychology of Terror," in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.*, ed. Helen Damico and John Leyerle (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1993), pp. 373–402.
 85. Much of John Hill's work with the poem has been aimed at establishing how the episodes of blood feud, which are so endemic in *Beowulf's* world, are not necessarily "dismaying" evidence of a society that cannot control (or "legislate") violence, but are rather "socially acute meditations on the prospects for settlement, for accomplished and extended community," as well as "meditations on the dynamic of group reformation...once lethal violence undercuts a prior accommodation": "The Ethnopsychology of In-Law Feud and the Remaking of Group Identity in *Beowulf*: The Cases of Hengest and Ingeld," *Philological Quarterly* 78 (1999): 97 [97–123]. In Hill's view, revenge for past or current injuries in *Beowulf* is often "juridical" and feud is therefore "jural." On this point, see also John M. Hill, *The Cultural World of Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), and *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000). Similarly, in their essay "Civilized Rage in *Beowulf*," Thomas L. Wymer and Erin F. Labbie argue that "controlled" or "highly ritualized" rage "is useful to the development of social relations and the nation": *Heroic Age* 7 (Spring 2004), <http://www.heroicage.org/issues/7/labbbie&wymer.html>.
 86. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 193.
 87. Lerer, "Grendel's Glove," pp. 738, 739, and 740.

88. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "The Body in Pieces: Identity and the Monstrous in Romance," in *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 94 [62–95].
89. Carolyn B. Anderson, "Gæst, gender, and kin in *Beowulf*: Consumption of the Boundaries," *Heroic Age* 5 (2001), <http://www.heroicage.org/issues/5/Anderson1.html>.
90. I want to thank Bruce Gilchrist for initially pointing out to me the sparseness of the landscape and architectural features with which Daneland is described in the poem. As Gilchrist himself puts it, "Daneland is only the hall and two narrow horse-path strips of land—one to the ocean, one to the mere. There are some descriptions of celebratory horse-riding, but nothing outside the paths. Aristocratic reality ends here and so do viable targets for Grendel's violence": Bruce Gilchrist to Eileen Joy, 5 April 2004, e-mail communication. Additionally, James Earl has written that the "peculiarity of the world of *Beowulf*... lies in what is not there. Except for the *burs* where men go to sleep, we hear nothing of the village or the people outside the hall.... The poem shows us the world of the hall from the inside and seems totally indifferent to the rest of the world outside": James W. Earl, *Thinking about Beowulf* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 116.
91. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," p. 20.
92. The meaning of the word *aglæca* has stirred controversy among Old English scholars, and has been taken to mean, disparately, a monster, a warrior, a devil, God, and a force of nature. Most translations of *Beowulf*, following Klaeber, have posited "monster" or "demon" when the word denotes Grendel. Roy M. Liuzza, in his recent verse translation, has used, alternatively, "ravager," "evil beast," "loathsome creature," "monster," "horrible creature," and "awful warrior," among others. But Liuzza also points out that the OE *aglæca* literally means "awesome one" or "terror," and that its translation in his edition is "admittedly tendentious": R.M. Liuzza, *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 75, n1. Alexandra Hennessey Olsen has suggested that an *aglæca* is one who violates a natural or moral law: "The Aglæca and the Law," *American Notes & Queries* 20 (1982): 66–68.
93. It should be noted here that although descendancy from Cain does lend to Grendel and his mother a human genealogy, according to the poet, it also means that they are what has been "awakened" and born as a result of Cain's exile: "giants and elves and bearers of distress, and likewise the gigantic ones" [*Panon untydras ealle onwocon, / eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas, / swylce gigantas*] (111–13).
94. Ruth Mellinkoff, "Cain's Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Nochaic Tradition," *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979): 151 [143–62].
95. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "*Beowulf*, Lines 702b–836: Transformations and the Limits of the Human," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23 (1981): 488 [484–94].
96. In his writing on the figure of the monster in Old English literature, Jeffrey Cohen uses the term *extimité*, or extimacy, to describe the "intimate alterity" of human identity: "its inescapable self-estrangement, the restless presence as its center of everything it objects in order to materialize and maintain its borders. To be fully human is to disavow the strange space that the inhuman, the monstrous, occupies within every speaking subject": Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "The Ruins of Identity," in *Of Giants*, p. 4 [1–28]. *Extimité* is a term borrowed from Lacan, explained by Jacques Alain Miller as designating "in a problematic manner the real in the symbolic." More simply put, *extimité* names the state of affairs whereby the exterior is always present in the interior, and further, "[e]xtimacy is not the contrary of intimacy [but]... the intimate is Other—like a foreign body": Jacques

- Alain Miller, "Extimité," in *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society*, ed. Mark Bracher et al. (New York: New York University Press), p. 75.
97. The translation of these lines has been much disputed; my reading follows the lead of Roy Liuzza who takes up in his translation a suggestion made by Fred C. Robinson in "Why is Grendel's Not Greeting the *gífstol* a *wæc micel*?" in *Words, Texts, and Manuscripts*, ed. Michael Korhammer (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1992), pp. 257–62. See Liuzza, *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, p. 58, n2.
 98. It is worth noting here that almost all of the so-called digressions in the poem, such as the Finn and Hengest story (1071–1159a), as well as Beowulf's account, just prior to fighting the dragon, of the seemingly perpetual hostilities between the Geats and Swedes (2426–89), concern themselves with feuds that can never be settled, except by vengeance, which in turn begets more vengeance, and so on and so forth. While I am mindful of John Hill's cogent and often compelling arguments that, in the social world of *Beowulf*, revenge is not always extralegal or something that can always be better replaced with some other form of non-lethal settlement, but rather, can be "jurally definitive," I am also persuaded by Clare A. Lees's reading of the poem as being about a heroic world whose ethos requires bloodshed and whose chief production is death—see "Men and *Beowulf*," in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 129–48.
 99. See, again, John Hill's work with poem (cited in n85).
 100. Much critical energy has been expended on Grendel's possible meanings on allegorical, symbolic, and "deep structural" levels (in other words, on his role as sign and signifier, as opposed to "creature" or "animal"), and more recently, explanations that take a psychoanalytic approach (and even, an ethno-psychoanalytic approach) are prevalent. According to Hill, Grendel's lawless murders and acts of cannibalism have "savagely roots [that]...go deeper than early Oedipal hostility toward siblings, working into an earlier psychological stage of anger: oral aggression organized out of the primal rage that follows the first loss (the breast)" (*The Cultural World of Beowulf*, p. 124). In "The Ruins of Identity," Cohen offers a Lacanian and Kristevan reading in which Grendel is a type of giant who represents a dangerous return to *jouissance*, and who also haunts the periphery of the warriors' identity, or "architecture of selfhood," from which he has been abjected. Further, Grendel's and his mother's dwelling, often swollen and swirling with blood, represents an "extimate trauma" that "lurks at the center of subjectivity, ensuring that the process of becoming human is also the process of becoming monstrous" (pp. 1–28).
 101. Carol Braun Pasternack, "Post-Structuralist Theories: The Subject and the Text," in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 186 [170–91].
 102. Pasternack, "Post-Structuralist Theories," p. 186.
 103. O'Keeffe, "*Beowulf*, Lines 702b–836," p. 488.
 104. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," p. 12.
 105. René Girard, *The Scapgoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 21.
 106. Cohen, "The Ruins of Identity," p. 8.
 107. Derrida, "Force of Law," p. 6.
 108. Cohen, "The Ruins of Identity," p. 26.
 109. Gibbs, "Philosophy and Law: Questioning Justice," p. 105.
 110. Cohen, "The Ruins of Identity," p. 26.
 111. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 152.

112. Andy Orchard has pointed out that Grendel's mother's mere is described in "human, almost homey terms": *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the 'Beowulf'-Manuscript* (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1995), p. 30; and Cohen has written that her underwater cave is "just another version of Heorot": "The Ruins of Identity," p. 27).
113. John Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 278.
114. In Book 11 of his *Libri Etymologiarum*, Isidore of Seville wrote that "monstrosities, *monstra*, are named from an admonition, *monitus*, because they point out something by signaling... what may immediately appear": quoted in John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 112.
115. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 193.
116. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 152.

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OTHERWORD

OPENING TIME: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND MEDIEVAL CULTURE

Michael Uebel

This essay holds out the hope that critical medievalism, especially psychoanalytic medievalism, will recognize itself as particularly well suited to advance the terms by which temporality can be understood as a vital cross-disciplinary concern.

Denn ich wüßte nicht, was [die Psychoanalyse] in unserer Zeit für einen Sinn hätte, wenn nicht den, in ihr unzeitgemäß—das heißt gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zugunsten einer kommenden Zeit—zu wirken.

[For I do not know what meaning (psychoanalysis) could have for our time if it were not untimely—which is to say, working against time, thereby upon time, and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.]

—Friedrich Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen”
(Old-Fashioned Views)¹

A brief consideration of the conflicted moment of psychoanalytic inquiry within medieval studies will, I believe, make a crucial point about the practice of psychoanalytic interpretation in general. In medieval studies, the assessment of how psychoanalysis enhances or, conversely, how it imperils time-honored practices of medievalism such as historicism and philology is a perennial critical enterprise. The present essay, however, has little interest in framing the question of psychoanalysis in this way. Indeed, it upholds Aranye Louise Fradenburg’s 1998 verdict as closed to appeal: “Psychoanalysis is simply *in* medieval studies now, in a variety of acknowledged and unacknowledged ways.”¹ Since Fradenburg’s decree, recent discussion of psychoanalytic inquiry’s relation to medievalism has seemed to me sterile, particularly as much of it is hampered by the terms of its own explicit polemics. Whether a defense or a critique of psychoanalysis, the critical tendency is toward isolating and fixing the content value of specific analytic concepts (e.g., family romance, the Other, the fetish, and so on) rather than toward engaging the historically contingent forms or structures these assume. These concepts appear only *over*

time. I would argue that this tendency toward favoring content-meaning over form and temporality makes all the difference: it distorts psychoanalytic inquiry on both sides of the critical divide.

Criticism of the psychoanalytic project, within medieval studies and beyond, tends not to appreciate that the fundamental insights of Freudianism, not to mention its enrichments (notably, object relations theory, attachment theory and its recent neurobiological elaborations, Lacanianism, and the theory of important dissidents such as Groddeck, Ferenczi, Tausk, Rank, and Reich), amount to explanations of the *formal* or *dynamic* dimensions of psychic and, powerfully in the case of Reich, social life. These explanations therefore cannot be dismissed by arguments rooted in *content* or *static* meaning. In this way, dispute over whether or not some object charged with affect can be properly called a fetish cannot constitute an argument against fetishism per se as a human practice occurring *in time*, one historically recognizable only because it possesses a certain form or rhythm, rather than a fixed content. Fetishism, Lee Patterson's recent mishandling of it, and the significance of other temporal formations are discussed in detail later on in this essay.

Proponents and practitioners of psychoanalysis, moreover, often ignore the richest insights of psychoanalytic thought by assuming, for example, that the meaning or, worse, the *truth* of the very objects (persons, places, things) of literary and non-literary historical record unlocks the deeper meaning of what is otherwise left unspoken as part of the record's "unconscious" or "margin." Take, for example, one of the most famous literary "case studies," Chaucer's simultaneously self-revealing and self-concealing Pardoner. Though many have tried to put him there, the Pardoner does not belong on the analytic couch at all,² as if this singular literary figure/object could be made to reveal something of his truth—in this case, his queerness, as a handful of critics tell us.³ Rather, attention to the formal structures of perversity⁴ in which he is linguistically bound and to the effects such structures have on producing in the modern reader a range of affectivities from homophobia to identification hold the most promise for understanding how, for example, "queerness articulates . . . a relation to existent structures of power" through what Carolyn Dinshaw appositely calls its "disillusioning, demystifying effects."⁵ The richest readings of the Pardoner, like Dinshaw's, have been able to point to the dynamic effects his presence has on those he "touches," medieval and modern. Yet, as powerful as they are, these readings tend nevertheless to declare something of the truth of the Pardoner's sexuality, to pronounce his queerness as the essential quality of his subjectivity.

Psychoanalysis can most powerfully contribute to a traditionalist discipline like medievalism and vice versa if it is first acknowledged that the foundational insights of psychoanalysis amount to claims about the formal dimensions of biopsychosocial existence *before* they are claims about content, statements about where static truth resides.⁶ For this very reason, Freud in his theoretical *magnum opus*, *Die Traumdeutung*, refused to include a dream key furnishing the meanings of particular dream images.⁷ The symbolics of dreaming do not comprise a set of fixed meanings for Freud. Not only, Freud stresses, are the latent meanings of no two dreams synonymous despite manifest likeness, but the very symbols any two dreams hold in common owe their significance to the different *dynamic* mental processes (e.g., repetition, secondary

revision, condensation, displacement, and so on) that express—indeed, sometimes by muting—the subject's dual response to interior urges and exterior stimuli. To understand, and optimally to fine-tune, the rhythm of a subject's response to internal (pleasure–unpleasure) and external (reality) demands is the primary mission of psychoanalysis. As I will suggest in the first section of this essay, psychoanalysis may be fully realizable as a project of *rhythmanalysis*, where, after Gaston Bachelard, well-being is a function of reliable rhythm mobilized against “temporal upheavals shatter[ing] life and thought.”⁸

Freud's conclusion that psychic as well as social existence amounts to managing the intricate rhythmical fluctuations between the “principles” of pleasure and reality roots the subject in dialecticality. The unavoidable convergence of such structures as activity and passivity contributes to an ambivalence of affect driving both “normal” emotional life (e.g., mourning, love, and hate) and perverse attachment (e.g., fetishism, sadism/masochism, and voyeurism/exhibitionism).⁹ Indeed, the priority that psychoanalytic theory assigns generally to the structural suspensions within so-called normal and perverse psychic operation suggests that the question of the truth of the historical subject cannot be framed atemporally, in static relation to whom he or she *is or appears to be* at a given time. Because social and individual identities, as we will see, are always the products of a certain *Nachträglichkeit*, or afterwardsness,¹¹ any historical practice that goes beyond Saint Augustine's “present time of past things” is thrown into radical question by the aims of psychoanalysis. History and with it the concept of truth often attached to it, I argue in this essay, are undone by psychoanalysis's distinctive articulation of the past, present, and future.

This essay holds out the hope that critical medievalism, especially psychoanalytic medievalism, will recognize itself as particularly well suited to advance the terms by which temporality can be understood as a vital (cross-)disciplinary concern. If our attention is deflected from a concern with truth *as a point of arrival*, it is in order to urge that only a *coming to knowledge* of truth, the arrival itself in all its potentially perverse forms, holds out the promise of a revitalized and revitalizing medievalism. To take seriously the process of knowing, of knowledge production, whether via philology or cultural studies (or their combination for that matter), is decisively not to declare, as Lee Patterson has, the value of present knowledge “a *hostage* to the future,”¹⁰ but to see it as the only promise of actually *producing* a possible future. The tone of defeatism in medieval studies has long been resonant, with the unimaginative reflection of Mary Carruthers, in her 1998 Presidential Address to the New Chaucer Society, just one poignant example: “I do not think we medievalists do well politically (let alone intellectually) to try simply to climb aboard the cultural studies wagon: we have been and always will be the first to be pushed off, no matter how cleverly we disguise ourselves.”¹¹ The naïve assumptions here are revealing of how an imaginary monochromatic collective (“we medievalists”) is expected to behave in relation to its others: rejected and put on the defensive by cultural studies, authentic medievalists should not pretend to be, that is “disguise” themselves as, cultural theorists. Carruthers's conception of the “true” medievalist is narrowly bounded by an arbitrary proscription of periodization and a creeping alteritism. Of course many medievalists, self-identified or not, have certainly done more than pass as theorists; indeed they have been major producers of cultural theory and the literary theory that to no small extent enables it—one thinks of Bataille, Jauss,

Greimas, Zumthor, Agamben, Benjamin, Iser, Kristeva, Heidegger, Gadamer, Bourdieu, and Alliez, to mention some who spring to mind. These thinkers, along with those who are more closely defined by the Anglo-American discipline of medieval studies—Fradenburg, Carol Clover, D. Vance Smith, Paul Strohm, Bruce Holsinger, Jeffrey J. Cohen, for instance—contribute, intentionally or not, to transforming critical medievalism (and with it, the very definition of what a medievalist is), from a discipline “based on expulsion and abjection and bound in rigid alterity,” as Kathleen Biddick puts it, to “one permeable to the risk of futurity.”¹² If medieval studies were to reinvent itself primarily as a “return to philology,” we should expect critical thought to retrograde, with the discipline becoming even more politically moribund.

Perhaps coming as a surprise to some of its critics, the fact is that psychoanalysis represents, for many whose criticism is informed by it, a crucial way of avoiding both intellectual rigidity and political sterility. Doubtless psychoanalysis from its inception has been uncongenial, often openly hostile, to deviations in doctrine and to active political commitment among its practitioners. This, however, says a great deal more about the human edifice of psychoanalysis (e.g., the training analyst and his institute)¹³ than about its theoretical, or even political, ground.¹⁴ Even Freudian pessimism, which found its partial antidote in different brands of ego psychology from Alfred Adler to Erik Erikson, is strangely amenable to futurity. This openness to the future in Freud is expressed, among other places, in the idea that analysis is *unendliche* (interminable).¹⁷ All that analysis can do, Freud maintains, is to “decide” its own provisional end; it can never celebrate the discovery of a truth rescued from oblivion.¹⁵ Analysis must content itself with historicizing not the truth but the subject’s *conviction of the truth* and, in this way, working through all the contradictions such conviction produces. Never reaching a foundation where, as Freud writes in “On Narcissism,” “everything rests,”¹⁶ the analytic construction enjoys no special privilege as any sort of totalizing critique.¹⁷

The Freudian object, like the Nietzschean one, is after all the “power of truth,” wherein truth has meaning precisely as an operation whose immunity to criticism extends even to the point where it is said to contradict reality. Accordingly, we are bound by the terms of our reality sense: “We cannot escape this world,” Freud insists; “we are always within it.”¹⁸ *Being within*, as Freud’s poetic essay “On Transience” makes clear, is preeminently a condition of temporality, an alienated relation to the cruelty and finitude of natural life.¹⁹ In the end, there is no retreat “outside” or “beyond” this world, with even the mysterious unconscious itself an impossible refuge for some discoverable truth about the self. The unconscious is, after all, *unheimlich* (un-homely, a-topic) and atemporal, with its multiplicity of desires shattering every illusion of linear progress toward truth.²⁰ Freudian analysis teaches us that, in the absence of a substitute for our “civilization’s discontent,” there is left only the possibility of critically describing our historical and cultural discontent. The labor of analytic description is thus by its nature contingent, incomplete, and, because it occurs within the time of crisis and unhappiness, risky. Freud saw the necessary incompleteness of critical description, what he termed *die Mängel unserer Beschreibung*,²¹ as the only construction or interpretation of which we can be sure.²² The time of analysis, it seems, is necessarily partial or fragmentary, as Freud’s experience of the curtailed analysis of Dora, his first great case study, dramatizes.²³

The Future Time of Analysis

The psychoanalytical assertion that a general truth about the subject and his or her desire cannot be defined in relation to whom one is in present time finds its theoretical articulation in a particular notion of temporality elaborated by Jacques Lacan in his 1945 essay, "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty."²⁴ Lacan's comments on time, in this early essay and in his later writing where there is a marked tendency toward aphorism, are rather enigmatic, and my only intention here is to offer a way of reading them that prepares the conceptual ground for a fuller examination of the dimensions of temporality proper to psychoanalysis and, by extension, to other modes of social and psychic investigation.²⁵ For Lacan, the question of the temporality of the subject is central not only to the technique of analysis (viz., Lacan's notorious "variable sessions") but ultimately to the status of psychoanalysis as a scientific project. Psychoanalysis, Lacan insists, furnishes itself with a scientific basis only by formalizing its notions of subjective time along with what he terms "intersubjective logic."²⁶ Intersubjectivity and subjective temporality, then, become the key terms by which Lacan theorizes "the logic which the concept of a subject, in relation to other subjects, and in relation to an individuating propensity, inherent in the rules of the game, requires."²⁷

The "rules of the game," comprising the social, intersubjective dimension of psychic existence, mark the framework within which Lacan supplements what might be termed a Freudian aporia of time. We recall that, for Freud, the unconscious knows nothing of time, is timeless, and hence "no unconscious correlate can be found" for death.²⁸ Death, the finality of time, leaves no traces in the unconscious for Freud, whereas for Lacan the death of things is the very predicate for claiming that one is alive. Symbolization, the putting of reality into language, strips things of their "thing-ness," and at the same time guarantees the continuity of desire: "the symbol first manifests itself as the killing of the thing, and this death results in the endless perpetuation of the subject's desire."²⁹ Lacan's account of the emergence of the symbolic order through the death of the thing is important to both his theory of temporality and his theory of intersubjectivity, for it is precisely when things assume a relation to other things that they can be said to have duration in time. Objects have a temporal duration that is bestowed upon them when two or more subjects together establish a symbolic world, and they do this through naming: "the name is the time of the object."³⁰

As the "Logical Time" essay shows, the rules of the game are structured around the act of naming. The "game" that Lacan describes—there are three prisoners and five discs (three white and two black), one of which is placed on each inmate's back by a warden who announces that the first one who can identify his own color and do so according to "logical and not simply probabilistic grounds"³¹ wins his freedom—is more than mere sophistry. It is a matter of the assertion of identity, where the fundamental question posed is: How do I name myself, declare my subjectivity, as in "I am..."? Lacan's answer was that it could be done with a degree of certainty only if the dialectical categories of time (life/death, memory/oblivion, past/future) were reorganized around waiting/concluding. In its most basic formulation, this new dialectical relation of hesitation and conclusion provides the source of what Lacan calls "subjective

logic," in other words, a logic based in a time whose intersubjective condition becomes an allegory for the psychoanalytic process, the time of analysis. In the game-theory model of the three prisoners, waiting assumes a logical function whereby one arrives at a solution to the question of subjectivity through a process of decision-making in relation to one's fellow human beings. Subjective time is thus filled with "the time for understanding"—in Lacan's schema, the logical period between the "the instant of the gaze" and "the moment to conclude"—a time not without its obsessional and narcissistic symptomatology,³² and one that, over the course of an analysis, will be annulled in favor of moments of concluding. This period is the one in which the subject assumes his history, and, together with the moment of concluding, it constitutes the Freudian *durcharbeiten* (working-through).

This revaluation of waiting as an act or logical moment necessary to *the arrival* at a truth likely justifies, as John Forrester has pointed out, Lacanian clinical practice where sessions of variable length mean that for analysts the time spent in the waiting room is, at least potentially, as productive as that spent on the couch.³³ By establishing a time of analysis coinciding not with Freud's reputed attention span (the so-called fifty-minute hour prescribed in classical psychoanalysis) but with the time of the unconscious itself, Lacan's technique reflects an important claim about the temporality of the subject. The use of radical brevity and intentional suspension enables the convergence of recollection *and* anticipation, where, Lacan writes, "analysis can have as its goal only . . . the subject's realization of his history in its relation to a future."³⁴ The assumption, by the subject, of the past and the future takes place through the mode of interlocution—"speech addressed to the other"—where the effect of psychoanalytic anamnesis is "to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come."³⁵ The analyst's neutrality, which Lacan says "takes its true meaning from the position of the pure dialectician," opens up the possibility for the subject's "becoming," a process involving the ongoing projection of history into discourse.³⁶

This projection of the past into language is not the mere articulation of what one *has been*; rather, it is an enunciation of what one *will have been*. The temporal structure of the subject may be specified, following Heidegger's *Being and Time*, as "futural" or, defined in terms of tense, as that of the future anterior.³⁷ Psychoanalysis views the past history of the subject in terms of a time that can never be fully remembered because it can never be said to have fully taken place. The subject is inscribed within the inclusive temporality of the "will-always-already-have-been" (*Immer-schon-gewesen-sein-wird*), a time that is always yet to come, in Heidegger's formula, a "being towards" (*Sein zu*). The opacity of this terminology aside, what this means for the subject of the unconscious is that it cannot grasp its history because certain elements of the past are always to be anticipated belatedly. We can understand then the future past of the subject as at the same time a mode of existence and a commentary on the possibility of (doing) history: "History is not the past. History is not the past in so far as it is historicized in the present—historicized in the present because it was lived in the past."³⁸ History involves an identification with what one will have been, as for example when Freud writes to Wilhelm Fliess in 1900 to express his desire that "someday one will read on a marble tablet on this house: 'Here, on July 24, 1895, / the secret of the dream / revealed itself to Dr. Sgm. Freud.'"³⁹ This expression of a wish or an ideal ego reads, indeed works, backward from a time

in the future when Freud's discovery will have been publicly acclaimed. The retroactive (*nachträglich*) temporal structure of the fantasy here amounts not to a memorializing of the (future) past, but to a manipulation of it, along with the present, in relation to the future. To put this another way, the past momentarily suspends the present so that the future becomes an open question, a possibility. The present is in effect left for another time.

In the structure of fantasy, wish fulfillment, and even utopia, where among the three temporal orders, it is the past that, from the perspective of psychoanalysis, is most fluid,⁴⁰ meaning is only created *ex post facto*, never instantaneously. The subject, always either *about to arrive* (i.e., on the verge of arriving) or *will have already arrived*, thus remains in a rhythm of abeyance or suspense. With the former temporal mode at work in Fourier and de Sade, and the latter in Marx and Thoreau, the subject of utopic thought is particularly sensitive to rhythm as a means of interpreting time as well as space. The Situationists, for example, envisaging what they termed "a sort of situationist-oriented psychoanalysis," did not limit their notion of the "constructed situation" to geographical theories and spatial practices but rather called attention, in the first issue of the *Internationale Situationniste* (1958), to "a unitary use of artistic means to create an ambiance . . . a unitary ensemble of behavior in time . . . composed of gestures contained in a transitory décor."⁴¹ Across the arts, especially those of the avant-garde, rhythm has been a predominant component of the theory and practice of forms such as painting (notably, in the work of Matisse),⁴² cinema,⁴³ and music and dance (e.g., Dalcroze's eurhythmics).⁴⁴ It is perhaps then no surprise that, for Bachelard, surrealist poetry epitomizes the necessary temporal dialectic or alternation between negation and creation, a dialectic he took to be fundamentally analogous to the rhythm of intellectual knowledge and of well-being.

Bachelard, the first to recognize the real psychoanalytical potentials of *rhythmanalyse*,⁴⁵ offers a theory of time as discontinuous in counterpoint to Henri Bergson's non-dialectical, continuous duration ("real time"). Because "all true duration is essentially polymorphous," it can only be constructed, Bachelard reasons, according to a rhythmicity that is not necessarily uniform and regular.⁴⁶ Against the central idea in Bergsonism that "being, movement, space, and duration cannot receive lacunae,"⁴⁷ Bachelard maintains that time can only be lived as a "series of breaks," its intrinsic heterogeneity offering the opportunity to both create meaning and to fail abjectly at it, to experience action as well as inaction ("repose"), joy as well as sorrow.⁴⁸ It is precisely in the expectation of failure itself that any sense of time as a uniform continuity is dispelled: how, Bachelard asks, can "a vivid premonition of the weakening and failure of being" or "regret for missed opportunities" fail to bring us "face to face with temporal dualities"?⁴⁹ To describe the psyche temporally is, for Bachelard, impossible without postulating lacunae, breaks, delays, fragmentations, negations, "movements towards the future or back to the past" comprising a "rhythm of *yes's* and *no's*."⁵⁰ This formulation of the psyche, which harmonizes with the psychoanalytical one as I have been outlining it, is organized around what Bachelard calls "the psychology of hesitation," an inquiry into those moments when the psychical reality of life opposes itself under the pressure of, say, fear, temptation, or masochism.⁵¹ And, crucially, both Lacan and Bachelard underscore the role of dialectic in psychical phenomena by emphasizing that "these dialectics are not, as followers

of traditional schools of thought would be inclined to think, logical in nature. *They are temporal.*"⁵²

Remarkably, Freud, in a brief commentary on the "Kantian theorem" that time is a "necessary form of thought," suggests that the claim about the unconscious as timeless is itself a theorem about time strictly *from the perspective of consciousness*.⁵³ Freud claims that one can only understand the "negative characteristics" of the unconscious—that is, its temporal disorder and resistance to change by time—by comparing unconscious mental processes with conscious ones. From such a comparison, the following conclusion, which Freud admits "must sound very obscure," might be drawn: "our abstract idea of time seems to be wholly derived from the method of working of the [perceptual-conscious system] . . . and to correspond to a perception on its own part of that method of working. This mode of functioning may perhaps constitute another way of providing a shield against stimuli."⁵⁴ The perceptual system, oscillating between the defense against and reception of stimuli, or, as we might rephrase it, fluctuating between pleasure and unpleasure, is responsible for our time sense.⁵⁵ As Freud put it in "A Note on the Mystic Writing-Pad," "the periodic non-excitability of the perceptual system," its "discontinuous method of functioning . . . lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time."⁵⁶ It is the dialectical nature of perception, involving moments of unreceptivity or repose, rather than simply a self-examining consciousness (as for Kant) or continuous feeling and thinking (as for Bergson), whose logic of interruptions, according to Lacan, "reveal[s] itself at each moment as the subjective unfolding of a temporal instance."⁵⁷

This unfolding of the temporal instant produces the possibility for seeing things anew, for tracing the rhythms and movements of objects or images that relentlessly confront us with their inevitability and finality. In this important sense, "time must therefore be taught."⁵⁸ The challenges of teaching time are, however, rarely met, indeed sometimes wholly unacknowledged, even among the revolutionary theories like Marxism most conducive to dismantling ideologies of irresistible progress based on a notion of time as infinitely linear. It is therefore easy to endorse Giorgio Agamben's identification of the strong tendency within modern political thought to elaborate notions of *history* while eliding corresponding concepts of *temporality*.⁵⁹ An exception to this tendency is Walter Benjamin's historical materialism, premised on the dialectical notion that historical "thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but their arrest as well."⁶⁰ As Agamben summarizes: "True historical materialism . . . is ready at any moment to stop time . . . It is this time which is experienced in authentic revolutions, which, as Benjamin remembers, have always been lived as a halting of time and an interruption of chronology. . . . But a revolution from which there springs not a new chronology, but a qualitative alteration of time . . . would have the weightiest consequence and would alone be immune to absorption into the reflux of restoration."⁶¹ The stopwatch of historical materialism has the power to overturn the reification of time that under the aegis of modernity has eroded the capacity for and communication of experience and that has, by essentially "detemporalizing" the subject, foreclosed utopic and imaginary thinking.⁶² That time can become arrested in the form of a fetish is, as we will see, not inconsistent with the revolutionary or utopian impulse to alter chronologies—of the self, of the socius, of history.

The Fetish-Character of History: Suffering Time

In the utmost form of suffering, namely, there exists nothing but the conditions of time and space.

—Hölderlin, "Remarks on 'Oedipus'"⁶³

The *flâneur*, the peripatetic loner first celebrated by Baudelaire as a mystery-seeker in the urban crowd,⁶⁴ apparently knew a deep secret about temporality: its everyday movement can be made irrelevant. Benjamin mentions the brief fashion around 1840 of taking turtles for walks in the arcades of Paris, when *flânerie* became a momentary stay against the whirling traffic of ideas and commodities in the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ The fad of keeping pace with a turtle, he writes, signified for the *flâneur* the wish that "progress would have been obliged to accommodate itself to this pace."⁶⁶ *Flânerie*, consuming incredible amounts of time through what has been called a mode of "psychotic appropriation," forestalls progress and the punch-clock regulation of labor and production that drives it.⁶⁷ One crucial dimension of the psychosis of *flânerie* is precisely its warped relation to, its passive-aggressive appropriation of, the economy of time, the very economy to which, as Marx reminds us, "all economy ultimately reduces itself,"⁶⁸ as if culture can be made to vanish ("Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at most, time's carcass"⁷²) as the victim of a certain historicity. Or, more precisely in the interval of the arcades, what disappears is an experience of time as dominated by the movement of progression, which is transformed from action to suspense, from productivity to intellectual perception. In this way, the *flâneur*, Benjamin insists, does not merely "pass" or "kill" time but rather he "stores" it, "as a battery stores energy."⁶⁹

In the metropolis, time trumps space to the extent that the *flâneur*, by practicing what Wolfgang Schivelbusch terms panoramic perception,⁷⁰ becomes unavoidably complicit with the routine of fleeting images and transitory movements, in the process defending himself against the untimely shocks and distractions of modern urban existence.⁷¹ Thus *flânerie* offers no more than a momentary respite from capitalism's seemingly infinite power to demystify and rationalize. By turning temporality into pure suspension and suspense, the *flâneur* is immersed in a rhythm that he can only anticipate with a high degree of uncertainty and some anxiety.⁷² The rhythm of time becomes meaningful if it is experienced in terms of a "peculiar irresolution," a "feeling of indecision" that Benjamin compares to hashish intoxication.⁷³ Indeed, the narcotic effects of *flânerie* extend to their virtual synonymy with those of the "situation of the commodity" itself, where, in "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," Benjamin identifies *flânerie* with the "intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers."⁷⁴ The intoxicated *flâneur* comes to dramatize the emptiness of the commodity form, its role as circulating fetish in the capitalistic sensurround.⁷⁵ In Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, this intoxication also appears as an "anamnesic" and empathic attitude toward both the sensory world and, more remarkably, an abstract world of "dead facts—as something experienced and lived through."⁷⁶ However, the *flâneur's* elemental vulnerability cannot be overlooked: what he recollects, through the filter of memory, is a radiant world of sensory stimuli too overwhelming to be absorbed, one that becomes livable only when diluted by its translation into the cold terms of the factual. It is no surprise then that Benjamin adduced the striking affinities between the *flâneur* and the urban detective.⁷⁷

It would seem that the narcotizing experience of *flânerie* is the precise key to the deformation of time inherent in the passage from one street corner to another. For the *flâneur*, “every street,” Benjamin declares, “is precipitous. It leads downward . . . into a past that can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private. Nevertheless, it always remains the time of a childhood.”⁷⁸ Descent into the impersonal past brings the sense that the world can be radically transformed only if grasped as an image that passes away. And so the historian learns the lesson of dialectic in the arcades: “Being past, being no more, is passionately at work in things. To this the historian trusts for his subject matter. He depends on this force, and knows things as they are at the moment of their ceasing to be. Arcades are such monuments of being-no-more. And the energy that works in them is dialectics. The dialectic takes its way through the arcades, ransacking them, revolutionizing them, turns them upside down and inside out, converting them, since they no longer remain what they are.”⁷⁹ While the *flâneur* is sleep-walking in the arcades, narcotized by the effects of what Benjamin refers to pejoratively as the “collective dream,”⁸⁰ the historical materialist,⁸¹ acutely sensitive to the rhythms of “the waking world,” is prompted by the present to remember the past as “the flash of awakened consciousness.”⁸² In this moment of awakening the historian experiences the present as a child might, always sensing the world afresh and drawing up into a single dialectical image multiple phenomena now wrenched from their sheer givenness (*Zuhandensein*). The historical materialist, free now to think in terms of images rather than concepts or stories, sets out to discover the truth that lies dormant in things, seeking formally to rescue the past “as an image flashing up in the now of recognizability.”⁸³

Remarkable in Benjamin’s historical materialism is the sustained attention paid to the “Refuse of History,” a world of fading things which, if it is to have any redemptive significance for the present, must be recognized, paraphrasing from the *Arcades Project*, as decaying into images rather than narratives.⁸⁴ Haunting the shiny spectacles of modern capitalism and the imposing phantasmagorias of fascism, both visual regimes occupying central places in Benjamin’s material history of the senses,⁸⁵ is the image of the ruin, the left-over, no-longer circulating commodity, apprehended in the very process of its imminent disappearance. “Anything,” Benjamin writes, “about which one knows that one soon will not have it around becomes an image.”⁸⁶ Ruins, or images as ruins, make up “the residues of a dream world,” the realization of which, “in the course of waking up, is the paradigm of dialectical thinking.”⁸⁷ The use of the ruin dialectically for the purpose of historical awakening involves a mode of temporality akin to that of the psychoanalytic process, where history and the future are co-articulated, in a way that depends upon the transference function: “What is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming.”⁸⁸ The temporality of the psychoanalytic subject, as we have observed, is that of becoming, “whereby the past dissolves in the present, so that the future becomes (once again) an *open question*, instead of being specified by the fixity of the past.”⁸⁹ The consistent Lacanian characterization of psychoanalysis as a dialectical experience,⁹⁰ as well as Freud’s core project to think through “*de(n) Abhub der Erscheinungswelt*” (the refuse of the phenomenal world),⁹¹ find their materialist complement, if not achievement, in Benjamin’s historicism.

The Proustian discoveries of materialist historiography are the careful products of what Benjamin calls “construction” as opposed to *reconstruction*, the latter comprising the work of traditional historicism, driven by a need to forget the present and to promiscuously empathize with indiscriminate pieces of the past. In the “bordello” of traditional historicism,⁹² memory of the past becomes, appropriately so given its figurative location, nothing more than a fetishistic practice, an encounter with fragments of the politically inert. The fetish-character of history, however, is undone by the method of materialist dialectics, with its “Copernican turn of remembrance”⁹³ and its commitment to an act of “‘construction’ [that] presupposes ‘destruction.’”⁹⁴ Rather than reconstruct an autonomous, and therefore readily fetishizable, past, historical materialism is animated by the desire to interrupt history’s unfolding, to break it down into multiple images. Central to this process of (de)construction are certain formal practices such as filmic montage, photography, and textual citation that, even while saving history from its total dissolution, reveal historical temporality to be essentially nonlinear.

This contradictory impulse at work in Benjamin’s historicism—sacrificing the totality in order to preserve it as a specific material and experiential construction—bears a striking affinity to the dialectical logic of fetishism as described by psychoanalysis. In its most fundamental aspect, fetishism is a hermeneutic strategy for coming to terms with the unsettling alterity of any difference predicated upon loss. Of course, in Freud’s theory, fetishism overcomes the traumatic threat of castration, the marker of sexual difference, and it does so according to the logic of disavowal (*Verleugnung*)—in Octave Mannoni’s well-known formula: “I know well, but all the same . . .”—whereby the subject retains the belief in the feminine phallus but also gives it up, repudiating what he knows to be true, namely, that a woman does not possess a phallus.⁹⁵ The hermeneutic strategy of fetishism thus amounts to a compromise whereby, as in historical materialism, a narrative, a story about “things as they really were,” is constructed as a representation of a permanently missing object. History—or, better, its truth—is not to be apprehended directly, but rather to be represented by something other than itself. This, for the material historian, is the “suddenly emergent” dialectical image by which history becomes legible.⁹⁶ The construction of the image in Benjamin and the creation of the fetish in Freud share a drive toward seizing this point of emergence, regardless of its context, “wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.”⁹⁷ The materialist historian must be a fetishist in the sense that he acutely experiences the image and its material constellation not as part of a temporal continuity, where the past illuminates the present and vice versa, but rather as a disjointed, decontextualized moment of time. For in fetishism, as Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit describe it, “the trick is to transform the moment at the origin of the fetishistic object’s powerful appeal (that is, the sight of the woman’s genitals) into an event already too late for any such investment of affect.”⁹⁸ The temporal “trick” of sexual fetishism is realized in historical materialism as a dialectical mode of understanding militating against the “vain endeavor” of what Benjamin, in his essay on Eduard Fuchs, the nineteenth-century collector of erotica and caricatures, refers to as “more intimate engagement” with the object. At best, the fetishistically invested collection becomes “the practical man’s answer to the aporias [*Aporien*] of theory.”⁹⁹

The affinity between fetishism and historical materialism, as practices of collecting and making sense, suggests not only that the fetish-character of historicist desire is inescapable, but that, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed it so succinctly in his final “working note” for *The Visible and the Invisible*, “every historical object is a fetish.”¹⁰⁰ The assertion that all historical objects are fetishes makes sense not in terms of what historical objects *are* but rather in terms of what they *do*. They are objects that, first and foremost, elude our control—a conceptual point upon which Freud, Benjamin, Proust, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty converge, despite their different aims and visions. To affirm as lasting that which is ephemeral is to regard the past, as Heidegger would have it, inauthentically. The truth of the past does not correspond to the experience of the past, and so the attempt to think of the past as in some manner under one’s present control, to deny the past’s contingency, is the hallmark of an inauthentic relation to it. The fetish comes in to provide that illusion of control, in the process both masking and pointing to an absence simultaneously. In short, the fetish makes and defends an argument about temporality and the possibility of knowing and measuring it.¹⁰¹ For Freud, this is an argument about the history of a trauma (castration is only one possible trauma) and how it can be retroactively compensated for.¹⁰² Fetishists, the psychoanalytic literature constantly reminds us, are notoriously difficult patients precisely because their defensive structure runs so well, built as it is around a refusal to keep time.

One of the profound ironies of fetishism is that its practitioners are guilty of misreading it. “The fixation which makes him a fetishist,” write Bersani and Dutoit, “is . . . his unfortunate, his erroneous reading of the original *movement* of his fetishism.” This movement is what I have described, following Benjamin, as a dialectical engagement with a “new object of desire and an unidentifiable first object.”¹⁰³ If the first term of the equation is lost, a substitutive formation rescues the subject so that history can become suddenly legible. It is not surprising then that attempts to theorize the fetish, whether by detractors or promoters of psychoanalysis, are subject to the same mistake the fetishist himself is—that is, arresting the *movement or rhythm* of the fetish through fixation.¹⁰⁴ Lee Patterson’s recent critique of the reigning psychoanalytic interpretation of Chaucer’s Pardoner appears doomed from its outset: by failing to recognize that it is not the object fetishized that is of real psychological significance but rather the specific form or motion that fetishistic desire takes—a form that turns out to be only tenuously related to the object as material reality—the best he can do is construct yet another allegory of the meaning of the fetish.¹⁰⁵ Patterson’s non-dialectical brand of historical inquiry fails, then, to bring us any closer to the medieval fetish since it persists in posing questions only about its meaning *at a given time* (i.e., Chaucer’s “age”), and, furthermore, by neglecting form, it generates more allegories, all of which turn out to be perfectly harmonious with the very hermeneutic system that he is trying to elude—psychoanalysis. To sacrifice an understanding of the temporality of the literary object for an understanding of its historicity, as Patterson has, vastly overestimates the power of historicism.

The interpretative power of psychoanalysis resides to the greater part in its untimeliness. Its value, as a critical and therapeutic practice, rests on its capacity to identify, analyze, and make relevant (e.g., ethically, politically) the shifting temporal modalities and rhythms of desire as well as defense. Psychoanalysis

interrogates the past, within the symptom of the present, for the sake of the future. In this process, linearity is discarded for a model of dialecticality. Thus, imputing to psychoanalysis, as its critics do, an uncritical investment in universal and timeless truths about subjectivity, ignores its complex account of time and history, its dialectical procedure, and, most tragically, its political charge.

Time at Hand: Neuropsychanalysis and Cultural Study

The political charge of psychoanalysis, in its full dialectical operation, is an obvious and strong point of attraction for cultural analysts invested in making the past relevant to the future. I have often speculated whether or not that is why some of the most insightful psychoanalytic readings of cultural and literary objects are currently being produced by medievalists. Medievalists have quite a bit at stake in making their discipline, not to mention themselves, relevant to an academy whose literature scholars seem perpetually on the hunt for the next way to cross an underrepresented group from column A with a theoretical concept from column B. I recently received, for example, a call for papers that proposed to merge trauma theory with the perspectives of indigenous and aboriginal cultures and another that wanted to read Marxism within the context of disability theory. As unimaginative as such prospective studies always are, their real fault, it seems to me, resides in their delusional sociopolitical significance. While mainstream medievalists are less guilty of such political extravagance, they nevertheless 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.¹⁰⁶ Another way to put this, à la Benjamin, is to say that medievalism demonstrates virtually none of the child-like grasp on the past and present that may be the *handsomest* part of our existence since it involves nothing less than our (having a) future.¹⁰⁷

It all comes down to, or back to, the central concerns of psychoanalysis and other helping professions: affect, behavior, and cognition. This essay raises the problem of future time in psychoanalysis because this A-B-C of existence should sensitize us to the necessity of grappling with the dialectical role of the future in the presently existing personality structure. Such grappling was at the core of the humanist project of one of the greatest theorizers of what is possible psychically, morally, and culturally—Abraham Maslow. In existentialist philosophy and in the neuropsychiatry of Kurt Goldstein,¹⁰⁸ whose work with brain-injured soldiers was extremely influential in the development of his concept of self-actualization, Maslow found stimuli for reimagining the boundaries of psychology and claiming for that discipline “a larger jurisdiction.”¹⁰⁹ Maslow proposed that “growth and becoming and possibility necessarily point toward the future; so do the concepts of potentiality and hoping, and of wishing and imagining; reduction to the concrete is a loss of future (no future = no neurosis); self-actualization is meaningless without reference to a currently active future; life can be a gestalt in time, etc., etc.”¹¹⁰ One effect of Maslow’s repeated *et cetera* is to dramatize the metonymic drive of time, that which is still to come, as the self-actualizing individual organizes her world and self on the horizon of the future. Maslow expressed this in no uncertain terms: “we must realize that *only* the future is *in principle* unknown and unknowable, which means that

all habits, defenses and coping mechanisms are doubtful and ambiguous since they are based on past experience. Only the flexibly creative person can really manage [the] future, *only* the one who can face novelty with confidence and without fear. I am convinced that what we now call psychology is the study of the tricks we use to avoid the anxiety of absolute novelty by making believe the future will be like the past."¹¹¹ If we can successfully avoid the future by framing it as merely more of the past, then, so the logic goes, we can trick ourselves into believing we are not neurotic: no future equals no neurosis. But of course such trickery is the very sign of neurosis, as well as perversion (e.g., fetishism), two of the three basic units of psychological analysis, and it does not belong, Maslow emphasizes, to the repertoire of the creative self-actualizing person.

Maslow's philosophy of time includes the notion that for human life to be meaningful, the reality of genuine choice and real alternatives must form the crucial context in which the capacity to actualize one possibility rather than another is exercised.¹¹² For psychology, this means that human freedom cannot be merely or only the elimination of compulsion; instead it must involve multiple paths to creativity, lest it be reduced to sterile discovery, what Dostoevsky's man from underground famously described as "the extraction of square roots." Indeed, Maslow's utopia, *Eupsychia* as he called it, bears striking resemblance to Dostoevsky's world as Bakhtin, another important theorist of time, describes it.¹¹³ For Dostoevsky, time is an open field of possibility, the space where we are, as Bakhtin puts it, "non-coincident with ourselves": "the genuine life of the personality takes place at the point of non-coincidence between a man and himself, at his point of departure beyond the limits of all that he is as a material being, a being that can be spied on, defined, predicted apart from his will, at 'second hand.'"¹¹⁴ From the interstice between identity and lived experience that which is truly new can emerge, first hand as it were. In one sense, to make a parenthetical remark, critics of mass culture and mass man, given their emphasis on the redemptive power of creativity and generativity, adopted this critical position decades ago, from Lindner to Riesman to Erikson to Marcuse.¹¹⁵ It was Hannah Arendt's rearticulation of this interstice as temporal in nature that offered a way to rethink "free time"¹¹⁶ and inspired postmodern revalorizations of the unexpected and surprising as the key to creating a world "in which time flows into a future neither fully determined by a discernible past nor fixed by its place in a cycle of eternal return, nor directed by an intrinsic purpose pulling it along."¹¹⁷

Postmodern chronotopes, grounded in plural and open modes of temporality, while in their essential form utopic, have the power nonetheless to empty human life of meaning. Because temporality is without doubt one of the most significant dimensions of social existence,¹¹⁸ it bears directly on how subjectivity will be expressed in the three basic domains: affectivity, behavior, and cognition. How we feel, act, and think is shaped and unshaped in no small measure by temporal orders that now seem woven into everyday life to the extent that they traumatize us in large doses (terror, war, war on terror) or narcotize us in subliminal ones (global capitalistic sensurround). A fine illustration of the latter is found in a recent psychoanalytic case report from Rio de Janeiro in which a young female urbanite's life is marked by disenchantment and a zombie-like pursuit of stimuli.¹¹⁹ The patient's sense of temporal significance is distorted such that only the fleeting present, the instantaneous moment, is recognizable to her. Disconnected from both past and future, the ephemeral moment brings limited

pleasure, despite the intense sensations it may evoke, and so it ends, without climax, as the search for another new image or experience begins. Ultimately the search for novelty fails to sustain selfhood, and the urbanite is left facing a future she feels impotent to shape, with any prospective endeavor “remain[ing] a distant dream, imposed from the outside.”¹²⁰ The patient’s self-determination thus enucleated, time stretches out into infinite boredom.

The postmodern zombie chronotope has an antidote, and in some sense its conclusion, in the rapidly shifting temporal orders of warfare. The latest phases of the Persian Gulf War have dramatized in multiple ways how time is one of the crucial dimensions of traumatization, both at the point of impact (exposure, injury, bereavement) and in the aftermath (trauma-related disorders, e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD). Examples of time-related stressors that are beginning to be recognized in the literature on war-related PTSD include: (1) the intense operational tempo of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, involving the quick transitions of deployment, return home, and redeployment; (2) the near instantaneous communication relays between the theater of war and home, particularly the heightened distress associated with information that is conveyed or received out of context or partially (e.g., e-mails and news media announcements); and (3) the unprecedented speed with which medical attention is provided to the wounded, resulting in significantly fewer deaths but substantially more mental trauma—in other words, injured soldiers are living who would have died in any previous war.¹²¹ Not surprisingly, military mental healthcare emphasizes speed in the treatment of those exposed to life-threatening events, recognizing, for example, that rapid family reunification is more effective than quick response front-line crisis counseling.¹²²

War’s sensitivity to time is measured by the extent to which psychological trauma has the power to disrupt “the unifying thread of temporality,” where clinical features associated with trauma, such as dissociation, multiplicity, alexithymia, amnesia, and somatization, are now seen as products of a distorted being-in-time.¹²³ Whereas psychotherapy, at least since the 1976 kidnapping and burying alive of a busload of schoolchildren in Chowchilla, California, has paid attention to the various post-traumatic psychic forms that disordered time assumes,¹²⁴ it has only been more recently that neuropsychanalytic investigations have begun to inform therapies based on the rapidly increasing knowledge of how the brain keeps time and regulates the biological and affective responses to trauma.¹²⁵ Psychoanalytic theory posits that, in the aftermath of trauma, time condensation takes the place of the memory so that the past is relived as a frozen replica structuring the subject’s image of the present and future. In the effort to understand the physiological basis for temporal condensation, neuroscience has focused on the hippocampus, a part of the subcortical brain that places us in the context of space and time, and informs us what is happening in relation to the future and the past by relating present information to the memories and experiences that we have collected.¹²⁶ Severe or sustained psychological stress compromises the hippocampus to the point of producing dissociative symptoms, or breakdowns in memory, consciousness, and identity.¹²⁷ In short, our sense of self depends on the healthy function of the hippocampus given the crucial integrative role it plays in our experience.

We are returned, then, to an idea explored in the first section of this essay: subjective time, understood scientifically, depends upon a theory or logic of intersubjectivity, and in this way it becomes fundamentally social and cultural. As

neuropsychanalysis has rapidly developed in the last decade, the question of how a person relates to another has taken center stage as the neuroscientific bases for attachment are being uncovered.¹²⁸ That this relation between persons is as much temporal as spatial is especially clear as the experiential world changes for all of us, however slightly and sometimes at levels below awareness, on anniversaries of traumatic events such as 9/11 or the last two days in January marking the 1968 Tet Offensive. This is not to suggest that the past fixes or determines us, but rather it makes us aware, often painfully so, of what we are in the process of becoming. What will we have been is perhaps the question, the only question, from which cultural analysis should spring.

Notes

I have substituted "psychoanalysis" for "classical philology" here in order to emphasize the untimely nature of the two disciplines at a time when critics of psychoanalysis and proponents of the "return to philology" in medievalism seem allergic to the utopic value of both. This translation, like all others unless otherwise noted, is mine.

1. Louise O. Fradenburg, "We Are Not Alone: Psychoanalytic Medievalism," *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998): 250 [249–76].
2. The reference here is to Lee Patterson's recent critique of Freudian psychoanalysis and its application in medievalism: "Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch: Psyche and Clio in Medieval Literary Studies," *Speculum* 76 (2001): 638–80. While Patterson and I would agree that the Pardoner does not belong on the therapist's couch, for Patterson that is because psychoanalysis is inherently flawed and deeply unsuitable for literary interpretation, whereas in my view psychoanalysis, in the hands of literary critics, is too rarely employed to take account of the way mental structures unfold over time, across history. In short, psychoanalysis is not flawed, but its deployment by literary critics certainly can be and indeed often is. For other responses to Patterson's skepticism, see Cynthia Marshall, "Psychoanalyzing the Prepsychoanalytic Subject," *PMLA* 117 (2002): 1207–16, and Elizabeth Scala, "Historicists and Their Discontents: Reading Psychoanalytically in Medieval Studies," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44 (2002): 108–31.
3. Arguments for the Pardoner's queerness have not been made within exclusively psychoanalytical terms, though clearly they are often informed by psychoanalytical insights; see, for instance, Steven F. Kruger, "Claiming the Pardoner: Toward a Gay Reading of Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale," *Exemplaria* 6 (1994): 115–39; Glenn Burger, "Kissing the Pardoner," *PMLA* 107 (1992): 1143–56; Carolyn Dinshaw, "Chaucer's Queer Touches/A Queer Touches Chaucer," *Exemplaria* 7 (1995): 75–92; and Allen J. Frantzen, "The Pardoner's Tale, the Pervert, and the Price of Order in Chaucer's World," in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections*, ed. Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 131–47.
4. Perversity, or perversion, as I shall be thinking about it, is not a term of stigmatization, but rather an analytic category referring to particular modes of thinking, acting, and fantasizing tied to, among other things, the subject's immersion in rhythms alternating between possession and dispossession, interiority and exteriority, proximity and distance.
5. Dinshaw, "Chaucer's Queer Touches," p. 77.

6. One list of such foundational insights is found in Didier Anzieu's brilliant discussion of Freud's dream book, *Freud's Self-Analysis*, trans. Peter Graham (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), pp. 564–65. I do not have the space to enumerate more of these insights, but I will sketch in this essay the outline of a possible approach to the formal logics of neurotic and perverse defense in order to show how they might relate to the notion of temporality.
7. Partly under the influence of Wilhelm Stekel, Freud would come to subscribe to the notion that dreams possess a repertoire of symbols whose meanings are at least somewhat independent of their formal context. Ritchie Robertson Crick, in his textual note to the new translation of the first edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, points out that "one effect of making the first edition available in English should be to dispel this misconception by showing that the original dream theory is based on a much more flexible and sensitive interpretation of dream imagery": Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. xxxviii.
8. Gaston Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, trans. Mary McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), p. 39.
9. On the paramount significance of activity and passivity in the neuroses in general, see Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1945). Particularly relevant in the Freudian corpus is *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), 14:111–40. Unless noted otherwise, subsequent references to Freud's work are to this edition.
10. Lee Patterson, "The Return to Philology," in *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, ed. John Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 240 [231–44]; emphasis mine. Here Patterson endows philology with dubious political value: as the repressed traumatic kernel of contemporary criticism (see p. 238), it represents the latter's "own greatest fear: that the whole enterprise *cannot* be justified in terms of social effectiveness" (p. 239). The value of philology seems to be merely that it indicts other fields of inquiry (especially activist-oriented ones) because it alone does not pretend to be political in the same way. Patterson appears as ready to celebrate the cultural irrelevance of medieval studies understood as something other than philology as does Mary Carruthers in her own benighted way.
11. Mary Carruthers, "'Micrological Aggregates': Is the New Chaucer Society Speaking in Tongues?" *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999): 12 [3–26].
12. Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 16.
13. Important here is a recent critique of psychoanalytic institutions as organized along the lines of religion rather than humanism or natural science; see Douglas Kirsner, *Unfree Associations: Inside Psychoanalytic Institutes* (London: Process Press, 2000).
14. If psychoanalysis has in fact repressed its radical past, as Russell Jacoby has claimed, some of its most important adherents have also been its staunchest critics, fighting openly and sometimes more covertly (like Fenichel) against the *embourgeoisement* of the movement: *The Repression of Psychoanalysis: Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians* (New York: University of Chicago Press, 1983). The work of these psychoanalytic radicals includes Wilhelm Reich, *The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971); Robert Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion* (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1952); Joel Kovel, *The Radical Spirit: Essays on Psychoanalysis and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); and Marie Langer, "Psicoanálisis y/o revolución social," in *Cuestionamos*, ed. Marie

- Langer (Buenos Aires: Granica editor, 1971), pp. 257–69. There is also an important, and unfortunately overlooked, sense in which psychoanalysis was from its inception an enterprise deeply committed to social justice, not afraid of challenging political and social traditions and actively brokering social change. See the rich history of the early European psychoanalytic movement provided by Elizabeth Ann Danto, *Freud's Free Clinics: Psychoanalysis & Social Justice, 1918–1938* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
15. This is Freud's lesson in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," in *The Standard Edition*, 23:216–53; see also his "Constructions in Analysis," in *The Standard Edition*, 23:257–69.
 16. Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," in *The Standard Edition*, 14:77 [73–102].
 17. See Alberto Asor Rosa, *Le due società. Ipotesi sulla crisi italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), p. xiv; cited in Rella, *Myth of the Other*, p. 30.
 18. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), in *The Standard Edition*, 21:65. Freud was fond of this quotation from Christian Dietrich Grabbe's *Hannibal* (1835); he cites it, for example, in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, dated 30 July 1915: *Sigmund Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé: Letters*, ed. Ernst Pfeiffer, trans. William and Elaine Robson-Scott (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), p. 32.
 19. See Freud, "On Transience," in *The Standard Edition*, 14:305–07.
 20. Rella summarizes: "Outside of this reality there exists no lost homeland, no possibility of escape from alienation—the Freudian *Unheimliche*—from *this* plurality, from this network of contradictions that characterize and 'perturb' our desire": *Myth of the Other*, p. 30. "Atopy" is Rella's neologism for approximating the Freudian *Unheimliche*, and thereby underscoring its alienating affectivity—the lack of home or place, being away from one's homeland. For the development of the term, see Franco Rella, *Limina* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1987).
 21. Freud, "Jenseits des Lustprinzips," in Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, 17 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1940), 13:65.
 22. See Freud, "Constructions of Analysis," in *The Standard Edition*, 23:263–69.
 23. Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," in *The Standard Edition*, 7:3–122. A fine discussion of this case as one that "oscillates endlessly between [Freud's] desire for complete insight or knowledge and an unconscious realization (or fear) of the fragmentary, deferring status of knowledge itself" is offered by Toril Moi, "Representation of Patriarchy: Sexuality and Epistemology in Freud's Dora," in *In Dora's Case: Freud–Hysteria–Feminism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer and Clare Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 181–99; see especially pp. 184–87.
 24. Jacques Lacan, "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism," in Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), pp. 161–75. Two detailed interpretations of the "prisoner's dilemma" treated in Lacan's essay are Robert Samuels, "Logical Time and *Jouissance*," *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 4 (1990): 69–77, and Bruce Fink, "Logical Time and the Precipitation of Subjectivity," in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 356–86.
 25. To this end, I am indebted to John Forrester's masterly reading of the Lacanian theory of time in *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 168–218.
 26. Jacques Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," in *Ecrits*, p. 239 [197–268].
 27. Forrester, *Seductions of Psychoanalysis*, p. 187.

28. Freud, "The Ego and the Id" (1923), in *The Standard Edition*, 19:58 [13–66]; compare with his "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety," in *The Standard Edition*, 20:129–30. A classic statement on the unconscious as atemporal is Marie Bonaparte, "L'inconscient et le temps," *Revue française de psychanalyse* 2 (1939): 61–105.
29. Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech in Language," p. 262.
30. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book Two: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvan Tomasevich (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 169.
31. Lacan, "Logical Time," in *Écrits*, p. 161.
32. See Samuels, "Logical Time and *Jouissance*," pp. 71–72.
33. See Forrester, *Seductions of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 188–90. Forrester explains the Lacanian short session and the paradoxical long waits it produces as a technique to dismantle the patient's obsessional symptoms (pp. 169–75).
34. Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech in Language," p. 249.
35. Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech in Language," p. 213.
36. Jacques Lacan, "Intervention on Transference," trans. Jacqueline Rose, in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), p. 72 [61–73].
37. The "future anterior" is also known as the "future perfect," a particularly equivocal tense in French, and one exploited by Lacan in his writings. The "futural" belongs to philosophy: "By the term 'futural,'" Heidegger writes, "we do not here have in view a 'now' which has *not yet* become 'actual' and which sometime *will be* for the first time. We have in view the coming [*Kunft*] in which Dasein, in its own most potentiality-for-Being, comes toward itself." As Heidegger goes on to specify it in the next paragraph, he has in mind a future that comprises "what-will-have-been": "Only so far as it is futural can Dasein be authentically as having been. The character of 'having been' arises, in a certain way, from the future": Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Collins, 1962), p. 373.
38. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book One: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–1954*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 12; compare with Sartre, "I *am* not my past. I *am* not my past because I *was* my past": Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant: essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (1943; repr. Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 154.
39. Freud, letter to Wilhelm Fliess, 12 June 1900, in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 417.
40. Recall Freud's early "extreme" position on memories: "It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating to* our childhood may be all that we possess": "Screen Memories," in *The Standard Edition*, 3:322 [303–22]. If all memories are screen memories, then it is senseless to look behind such screens to some "original, primal" trace. Derrida's critique of truth as a disclosing is an important commentary on this: "Le facteur de la vérité," in Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 413–96.
41. "Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation," trans. Ken Knabb, in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1995), p. 43 [43–45].
42. See Mark Antliff, "The Rhythms of Duration: Bergson and the Art of Matisse," in *The New Bergson*, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 184–208.

43. See Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
44. The Swiss composer and teacher Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950) developed the technique of eurhythmics for expressing the rhythmical aspects of music by physical movement; it was to have great influence on the development of twentieth-century dance. Before he became head of an institute of eurhythmic instruction in Geneva (1914–50), where his pupils included Mary Wigman and Hanya Holm, he was already internationally famous, with branch institutes in Hellerau (Germany), Kiev, Prague, St. Petersburg, and Warsaw. See Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Eurhythmics, Art and Education*, trans. Frederick Rothwell (New York: Ayer Company, 1976). Dalcroze's philosophy and pedagogy is examined in Marie-Laure Bachmann, *Dalcroze Today: An Education Through and Into Music*, trans. David Parlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
45. The genealogy of rhythmanalysis as a critical project traces its origin to the work of the obscure Brazilian philosopher Lucio Alberto Pinheiro dos Santos, whose *La Rythmanalysis* (1931) deeply influenced Bachelard. Bachelard, in turn, influenced the notion of rhythmanalysis as theorized most recently by Henri Lefebvre who saw it as a crucial alternative to psychoanalysis. See Henri Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes* (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1992); *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 205–07; and “Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities,” *Writings on Cities*, ed. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 228–40.
46. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, p. 20.
47. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, p. 28.
48. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, p. 51. “The dialectic of joys and sorrow is never so absorbing as when it accords with the dialectic of time” (p. 51).
49. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, p. 51.
50. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, pp. 131 and 43.
51. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, p. 40; compare with p. 41.
52. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, p. 42; emphasis mine.
53. Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *The Standard Edition*, 18:28 [7–64].
54. Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *The Standard Edition*, 18:28. The radical theoretical extension of this “obscure” statement—that conscious time is itself a repudiation of or stimulus barrier to unconscious time, with its tension-raising *eros* and narcissism—is explored by Alan Bass, *Difference and Disavowal: The Trauma of Eros* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 83–86 and 237.
55. Recent psychoanalytic theory emphasizes this correlation of temporality and affectivity where the notion of time is acquired by the infant as she experiences objects as alternately fulfilling of needs or satisfying and frustrating. The affective dimensions of adult psychopathology then become explicable in terms of time. For example, depression is associated with a pathological relation to the past and anxiety with one to the future. And, most importantly for our purposes, timelessness is theorized, as in the Freud quotation above, as a defensive retreat from an unpleasurable awareness of time or history. For theory on temporality and mind after Freud, see Jacob Arlow, “Time as Emotion,” in *Time and Mind: Interdisciplinary Issues*, ed. J.T. Fraser (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1989), pp. 85–97, and Peter Hartocollis, *Time and Timelessness, or The Varieties of Temporal Experience* (New York: International Universities Press, 1983).
56. Freud, “A Note on the Mystic Writing-Pad,” in *The Standard Edition*, 19:231 [227–32].
57. Lacan, “Logical Time,” p. 166.

58. Bachelard, *Dialectic of Duration*, p. 49.
59. See Giorgio Agamben, "Time and History: Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," in Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1993), pp. 91–105.
60. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," trans. Harry Zohn, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 396 [389–400].
61. Agamben, "Time and History," p. 105.
62. On how Benjamin diagnoses the atrophy of experience, temporal and spatial, his essay on Leskov is particularly revealing; see Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," trans. Harry Zohn, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, 1935–1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 143–66.
63. Friedrich Hölderlin, "Remarks on 'Oedipus,'" in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*, trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 108 [101–08].
64. Baudelaire's best-known depiction of the *flâneur* is his 1863 essay "Painter of Modern Life," in Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. and ed. P.E. Charvet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 395–422; see also Baudelaire's sketches collected in *Paris Spleen*, trans. L. Varèse (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1970).
65. There is a marked nostalgia here for a slower, more certain world. On this point and related ones concerning the passion for *flânerie*, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
66. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Verso, 1973), p. 54. Benjamin notes that this fad was to be replaced with Taylor's popular slogan "Down with dawdling!" (p. 54; citing Georges Friedmann, *La crise du progrès* [1936], p. 76). Benjamin mentions the fad again in his *Passagen-werk* [Arcades Project]; see Walter Benjamin, "M [The Flâneur]," in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eilen and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 422 [416–55].
67. Rob Shields, "Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on *flânerie*," in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1994), p. 73 [61–80].
68. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1973), p. 173.
69. Walter Benjamin, "D [Boredom, Eternal Return]," in *Arcades Project*, p. 107 [101–19].
70. See n68.
71. Benjamin's notion of how shock restructures conscious and unconscious life is found in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings, 1938–1940*, pp. 313–55; see especially p. 319. Simmel's famous essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1902–03), which investigated the mechanisms of defense deployed to protect the urban subject against the overwhelming and punctuated rhythm of impulses, informs Benjamin's concern with modern life as a field of shock experiences. See Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Wiley, John and Sons, 1950), pp. 409–24. Jonathan Crary offers an important qualification of the views of modernity in Benjamin and Simmel, as well as in Adorno and Siegfried Kracauer, by suggesting that modern distraction and shock are better conceptualized as effects, even constituent elements, of attempts to produce

- attention in subjects. See Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 11–79.
72. The anxiety, indeed the impossibility, of *flânerie* in the twentieth century is dramatized, from its opening pages, in Robert Musil's modernist masterpiece *The Man without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1996).
 73. Benjamin, "M [The Flâneur]," p. 425.
 74. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 55.
 75. "Empathy with the commodity is fundamentally empathy with exchange value itself. The flâneur is the virtuoso of this empathy": Benjamin, "M [The Flâneur]," p. 448.
 76. Benjamin, "M [The Flâneur]," p. 417.
 77. "Preformed in the figure of the flâneur is that of the detective": Benjamin, "M [The Flâneur]," p. 442; see also pp. 440–42. In his short review of Franz Hessel's *Spazieren in Berlin* (1929), Benjamin draws attention to the flâneur's "detective intuition," comparing it, along with his "clerical dignity," to G.K. Chesterton's detective-hero Father Brown. See "The Return of the Flâneur," trans. Rodney Livingstone, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, 1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 264 [262–67]. Noteworthy as well are the important affinities between *flânerie* and collecting for Benjamin. On collecting and the material economy of memory, see Michael P. Steinberg, "The Collector as Allegorist: Goods, Gods, and the Objects of History," in *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*, ed. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 88–118.
 78. Benjamin, "M [The Flâneur]," p. 416. A slightly different formulation of the same idea is found in his "The Return of the Flâneur," in *Arcades Project*, p. 262.
 79. Benjamin, "First Sketches," in *Arcades Project*, p. 833; compare with fragment 76a,4 in Benjamin, "J [Baudelaire]," in *Arcades Project*, p. 363 [228–387].
 80. "The dreaming collective knows no history. Events pass before it as always identical and always new"; see Benjamin, "S [Painting, Jugendstil, Novelty]," in *Arcades Project*, p. 546 [543–61].
 81. I retain Benjamin's usual formulation "historical materialist" while recognizing that Benjamin himself, given his deviation from traditional Marxism, is perhaps better described as a materialist historian. On Benjamin as materialist historian, see H.D. Kittsteiner, "Walter Benjamin's Historicism," trans. Jonathan Monroe and Irving Wohlfarth, *New German Critique* 39 (1986): 179–215.
 82. Benjamin, "K [Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future, Anthropological Nihilism, Jung]," in *Arcades Project*, p. 388 [388–90].
 83. Benjamin, "N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," in *Arcades Project*, p. 473 [456–88]. Compare with the first plank of Benjamin's "elementary doctrine of historical materialism": "An object of history is that through which knowledge is constituted as the object's rescue" (p. 476).
 84. See, for example, "N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," p. 476. The "Refuse of History" is a cross-reference tag Benjamin applied to some of his fragments in "N"; see Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 461.
 85. Benjamin's devotion to the visual has been recently analyzed in terms of its double relation to the fascist spectacle and capitalist phantasmagoria; see Lutz Koepnick, *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), pp. 141–212. On Benjamin's concept of phantasmagoria, see Margaret Cohen, "Walter Benjamin's Phantasmagoria," *New German Critique* 48 (1989): 87–107, and Gyorgy Markus, "Walter Benjamin or The Commodity as Phantasmagoria," *New German Critique* 83 (2001): 3–42.

86. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 87.
87. Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," trans. Howard Eiland, in *Selected Writings, 1935–1938*, p. 43 [32–49].
88. Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech in Language," p. 86.
89. Forrester, *Seductions of Psychoanalysis*, p. 206.
90. See, for example, Lacan, "Intervention on Transference," p. 63.
91. Freud, "Die Fehlleistungen," *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, 11:20.
92. From the sixteenth thesis; see Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings, 1938–1940*, p. 396.
93. Benjamin, "K [Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future, Anthropological Nihilism, Jung]," pp. 388–89.
94. Benjamin, "M [The Flâneur]," p. 470.
95. See Octave Mannoni, "'I Know Well, But All the Same...,'" trans. G.M. Goshgarian, in *Perversion and the Social Relation*, ed. Molly Anne Rothenberg, Dennis Foster, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 68–92. Freud associated this strategy with ego-splitting, a concept to which almost half of his brief essay on fetishism is devoted; see his "Fetishism," in *The Standard Edition*, 21:152–57.
96. Benjamin, "N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," p. 462. Ackbar Abbas reads Benjamin's "Medusan" philosophy of history (as Adorno put it) in terms that link it to Freud's interpretation of the Medusa image and the theory of fetishism; see Ackbar Abbas, "On Fascination: Walter Benjamin's Images," *New German Critique* 48 (1989): 56–60.
97. Benjamin, "N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," p. 463.
98. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *The Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern Culture* (New York: Schocken, 1985), p. 68.
99. Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," trans. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, in *Selected Writings, 1935–1938*, p. 263.
100. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 275.
101. Thus Benjamin calls fashion, the consummate Parisian fetish, the "measure of time"; see "First Sketches," p. 830. Compare with Benjamin's description of the project of the "Pariser Passagen" to Hugo von Hofmannsthal in a letter dated 17 March 1928, where he wrote, "I am currently looking into the sparse material that thus far constitutes all efforts to describe and fathom fashion philosophically: into the question of what this natural and totally irrational, temporal measure of the historical process is all about": in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 329.
102. Freud, in his unfinished essay on the "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense" (1940), points the way to a more general, formal model of how the ego reacts to any threat, where the setting up of the fetish in response to castration functions as an *exemplary* instance of the defensive process of ego splitting; in *The Standard Edition*, 23:275–78.
103. Bersani and Dutoit, *Forms of Violence*, p. 71.
104. Recognizing and avoiding this critical pitfall is Teresa de Lauretis's theory of the forms of homosexual subjectivity and the mobility of lesbian desire, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 203–97.
105. This is precisely what he does: his reading of the Pardoner's "spiritual sterility" is yet another allegory of desire, in this case misdirected or sinful desire. This ultimately becomes a reading of the Pardoner's (and presumably Chaucer's

- audience's) concern with mortality. (A baffling claim, typical of Patterson's tendentious reading of psychoanalysis, is the assertion that "Freud and his disciples" hold sexuality, not mortality, to be the one thing common to human beings.) Further allegorizing: the true relic, Patterson claims, would have been understood as "holy," as "eras[ing] the line between the material and the spiritual"; see "Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch," pp. 677 and 675. This is offered as a late-medieval English understanding of the relic; at any rate, it restates the problem of the fetish in terms fully consistent with a psychoanalytic understanding. Multiple readings of the fetish link it to the transitional object in terms resonating with Patterson's understanding of the medieval relic (viz., as a bridge between the visible and the invisible); see, for example, the essays in *Between Reality and Fantasy: Transitional Objects and Phenomena*, ed. Simon A. Grolnick and Leonard Barkin (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978), esp. Leonard Barkin, "The Concept of the Transitional Object," pp. 513–36.
106. My guess would be that rare moments such as the following often go unremarked in mainstream medievalism: I am thinking of the work of the medieval historian Bernard Bachrach in collaboration with Jerome Kroll on self-injurious behavior as manifested in patients with Borderline Personality Disorder. See Jerome Kroll, *PTSD/Borderlines in Therapy: Finding the Balance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), pp. 79–97.
 107. Something in the phrasing owes to Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). The notion that we tend to treat time in our everyday lives as "ready to hand," to borrow Heidegger's formulation, does not militate against the idea of taking time into our own hands, in the sense of shaping a future. On Heidegger and taking time for granted, see B.D. Slife, *Time and Psychological Explanation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).
 108. See Kurt Goldstein, *The Organism* (1939; repr. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); *Human Nature from the Point of View of Psychopathology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940); and "Health as Value," in *New Knowledge in Human Values*, ed. A.H. Maslow (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 178–88.
 109. Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 3rd edn. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999).
 110. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, p. 20.
 111. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, p. 20.
 112. Thus self-actualizing persons do not consider time wasted if it carries with it an end experience, where the enjoyment of wasting time might very well constitute such an experience. See Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd edn. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 235–36.
 113. On Bakhtin's conceptualization of open time, see the very suggestive essay, to which I am indebted, by Gary Saul Morson, "Strange Synchronies and Surplus Possibilities: Bakhtin on Time," *Slavic Review* 52.3 (1993): 477–93. See Morson's more expansive reading of the relation of time to narrative form in his *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
 114. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 59.
 115. See, for example, Robert Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion* (New York: Rinehart, 1952); David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1961; repr. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1964); and Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964) and *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; repr. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

116. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971), 1:205.
117. William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 143.
118. See, for example, Judith A. Howard and Jocelyn A. Hollander, "Marking Time," *Sociological Inquiry* 63.4 (1993): 425–43. On the ways that temporality bears on learning in the classroom, see John Lofty, "Timescapes for Literacy: Time in Academic Communities," *College Literature* 22.2 (1995): 16–41.
119. Cristiana Carneiro, "A Contemporary Notion of Time: Fragments of a Case from Rio de Janeiro," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 11 (2002): 141–48.
120. Carneiro, "A Contemporary Notion of Time," p. 144.
121. The complex picture of the Iraq War and its impact on soldiers and their families was sketched by Robert J. Ursano, "Soldiers Returning Home from War: Professionals and the Community Addressing the Trauma of War," presented 11 January 2006, Houston–Galveston Psychoanalytic Society, Houston, TX.
122. Michael J. Stoil, "Military Mental Healthcare at the Cutting Edge," *Behavioral Health Management* 22.5 (September/October 2002): 9–10. See also Lynne Lamberg, "Military Psychiatrists Strive to Quell Soldiers' Nightmares of War," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 292.13 (2004): 1539–40, and Charles W. Hoge et al., "Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 351.1 (2004): 13–22.
123. Robert D. Stolorow, "Trauma and Temporality," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 20.1 (2003): 158 [158–61]. See also Philip M. Bromberg, "'Speak! That I May See You': Some Reflections on Dissociation, Reality, and Psychoanalytic Listening," in *Standing in the Spaces: Essays on Clinical Process, Trauma, and Dissociation* (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, 1998), pp. 241–66.
124. See Lenore Terr, "Psychic Trauma in Children: Observations following the Chowchilla school-bus kidnapping," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 138.1 (1981): 14–19; "Time Sense following Psychic Trauma: A Clinical Study of Ten Adults and Twenty Children," *American Journal of Ortho-psychiatry* 53 (1983): 244–61; and "Time and Trauma," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 39 (1984): 333–66.
125. See, for example, Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy: Building and Rebuilding the Human Brain* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002); Allan N. Schore, *Affect Dysregulation and Disorders of the Self* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003) and *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); *Healing Trauma: Attachment, Mind, Body, and Brain*, ed. Marion F. Solomon, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion Solomon (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain in Psychotherapy: How Neural Plasticity and Mirror Neurons Contribute to Emotional Well-Being* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); and, on working with time directly in analysis, Daniel N. Stern, *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005).
126. See Lynn Nadel and Veronique Bohbot, "Consolidation of Memory," *Hippocampus* 11 (2001): 56–60. Studies of brain activity during and in the aftermath of exposure to trauma-related stimuli are prolific, and they implicate other regions of the brain, especially the amygdale, orbitofrontal cortex, and anterior cingulate gyrus. Recent research includes Steven H. Woodward et al., "Decreased Anterior Cingulate Volume in Combat-Related PTSD," *Biological Psychiatry* 59.7 (2005): 582–87, and Lisa M. Shin et al., "Regional Cerebral Blood Flow in the Amygdala and Medial Prefrontal Cortex during Traumatic Imagery in Male and Female Vietnam Veterans with PTSD," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 61 (2004): 168–76.

127. Higher stress-induced levels of cortisol are associated with hippocampal damage; see Ramon J.L. Lindauer et al., "Cortisol, Learning, Memory, and Attention in Relation to Smaller Hippocampal Volume in Police Officers with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Biological Psychiatry* 59 (2006): 171–77.
128. See, in addition to sources cited elsewhere in my notes, Peter Fonagy, Gyorgy Gergely, Elliot Jurist, and Mary Target, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self* (New York: Other Press, 2002), and *The Neuroscience of Social Interaction: Decoding, Imitating, and Influencing the Actions of Others*, ed. Christopher D. Frith and Daniel M. Wolpert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

AFTERWORD

INTERTEMPORALITY

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen

No matter how far or how fast he runs, this chain runs with him. It is something amazing: the moment, in one sudden motion there, in one sudden motion gone, before nothing, afterwards nothing, nevertheless comes back again as a ghost and disturbs the tranquility of each later moment.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*

A Conclusion in Which Nothing is Concluded

A much-cited book by the sociologist of science Bruno Latour declares that *We Have Never Been Modern*.¹ Reading through the essays collected in *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages*, it is tempting to declare in kind that *We Will Always Be Medieval* (or, if Michael Uebel's Otherword to this book is to be taken seriously, *We Will Always Have Been Medieval*, or something as yet unthought and still in the future but inhering in the past). The winding threads of the shared conversations in these essays have led to unexpected conjunctions: cable television with Chaucer, Heorot with Chechnya, George Bush with Henry Bolingbroke, penance manuals and Arthurian myth with reality television. Time, in other words, tends to be not some neatly divisible category (past, present, future; beginning, middle, end) but an obdurate enfolding, an admixed middle space that cannot be separated into cleanly discrete moments. Forget the clichéd progress narrative of how the contemporary had to leave the medieval behind to become its resplendent self. Forget the historical denigration of the medieval as abject, other, undeveloped. In their insistence upon the intimacy of the medieval within the modern and the modern within the medieval, these essays offer theories of temporal interpenetration, of intertemporality.

The chronologies detailed here are complex, nonlinear. They are stories of how the past cohabitates the present and might even trigger unexpected futures. It might seem odd, then, to have such a temporally intermixed book terminate with an Afterword, as if a last word could be placed upon the messy timelines that precede it. In the rumination that follows I will in fact suggest some possibilities for future thinking that build upon the work accomplished here,

wandering and expanding rather than summarizing and moving towards a false sense of conclusion.

The essays gathered in *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages* have much in common: a binding of time to culture, a desire to blur historical demarcations, a focus upon identities past and present. These shared preoccupations give the volume its sense of mission and are the foundation for its opening the field of medieval studies to new ways of posing its questions. With his emphasis on afterwardsness [*Nachträglichkeit*] and the interminable [*unendliche*], Uebel gives these sometimes implicit ambitions a theoretical undergirding. The volume critically reconsiders temporality, offering analyses that (within the critical language articulated so well in the editors' Introduction) amount to a strategy of reading texts carefully against their own grain, discovering what they have to say of the worlds that produced them as well as to the worlds in which they now find themselves. Yet many essays also share a trait that works somewhat against their expansionary desires: an implicitly American ambit. The war in Iraq and television shows like *Survivor* are, from one point of view, inherently international. Yet even if they mainly unfold in distant geographies and involve other countries as participants, spectators, or victims, these are still USA-centric events (the war was instigated and is being run by the current president; the castaways vying for a million dollars might sail to Panama or Polynesia but they are U.S. citizens being watched by U.S. citizens). The Middle Ages that informs the majority of the essays in this book is fairly Anglocentric and Christiancentric: not surprising, of course, given that the version of the Middle Ages that dominates the American academy is mainly anglophile and Christian. This enduring postcolonial inheritance determines what history is most easily available for both scholars and the public to love. By mapping a congress between a history that unfolded in Europe and the present of a country that its contributors inhabit, *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages* tends to Americanize the Middle Ages even as that past is reevaluated.

This collection of essays examines *milieux* and *durées*, both medieval and modern, where placid words like "internationalism" fail to capture the actual turbulence that sweeps through them. When peoples, cultures, religions intermix, the results are seldom that "melting pot" of diversity into uniformity of which Americans were once so enamored. Such collision points are far more likely to engender conflict-prone and uneasy admixture, a roiling stew of competing ideologies, languages, values.

A stew—or, perhaps, a soup.

La Soupe au cochon (A Wrinkle in Time)

Like the molecules that in their aggregation give an object its heft, time is a substance. It accretes unevenly to objects, clings, seeps and penetrates, abrades. As duration and as drag, as a chain that pulls backwards and as an unceasing impetus towards futurity, time is essential to an object's materiality. Yet just as friction or chemical reaction may erode an object's features, may alter its substance and form, temporality can be lost as an object mutates, headed either towards an oblivion of insubstantiality or a renaissance of new use that obscures its elder lives. Time can in fact be best described as the infinite history of an object's materialization, of an identity in ceaseless motion. Thickness of temporality, combined with the

potentialities imbued by physical composition and form, ensures that an object asserts what amounts to a will as it moves through and is moved by the world.²

Every object is therefore a temporal archive, a repository for multiple pasts and a trigger for unanticipated futures.³ Even food, among the most ephemeral of objects, can serve as such an archive, its dormant histories awakening to reassert themselves in surprising ways. Take, for example, pork. The pig carries its close association with humans in its genes. It does not fear the creatures who have domesticated it, happily cohabitating with them. In its anatomy and form the pig even resembles its human subjugators (and vice versa). Yet the pig also does not forget the omnivore of the woods from which it was shaped. A friend and foe at once, the pig enfleshes all kinds of conflicting histories, much of it shaped by its intimate otherness to the human—an intimacy furthered as the animal is transformed from living creature to ingested repast.

In an age that lacks refrigeration the pig is a convenient storage device: feed it during a time of plenty, fatten its flesh, and when the need for sustenance arrives, slay and eat it.⁴ Complexity enters this simple formula when the pig crosses a cultural border, devouring things that are forbidden to some humans, such as corpses or infants.⁵ And what of societies that do not consume pigs, peoples who define themselves by their abstinence from pork? What happens when Muslims and Jews mingle with those for whom dining upon pig flesh is part of the alimentary rhythm of life? The animal, history demonstrates, will become a powerful symbol of both belonging and exclusion, sometimes in a way that confuses these categories rather than keeps them cleanly separated.

In the Middle Ages pork could, as a kind of cultural shorthand, stand in for Christianity itself. Gerald of Wales once described a demon who announced that his favorite people to possess were Jews and demons, since he did not care for the pork-eating habits of the other residents of Italy, making that common Christian food a strange equivalent to the Eucharist.⁶ To penetrate a naval blockade of Acre, some Muslims shaved their beards, donned western clothes, and placed pigs aboard their ships, distilling the visible essence of being a Christian into clothing, grooming, and consumption.⁷ In a famous Middle English romance about Richard the Lionhearted, the English king mistakes the roasted Saracen he has been secretly fed for an especially tasty pig. Geraldine Heng has written at length about how this spectacular episode differentiates the Christians from the Muslims, but at the same time the cannibalism weirdly amalgamates the two identities.⁸ Similarly, as the *Judensau* the pig would become a metonym for a group of people who do not eat it, so that Jews and pigs eventually became closely associated rather than cleanly separated.⁹

The flesh of an animal that has long lived as a kind of intimate stranger with humans and has been profoundly transformed by them, pork is a temporal archive, possessed by a history that connects it to the Hebrew Bible, the Qu'ran, the desire of Christians to differentiate themselves from Jews, beliefs about Jewish literalness and Christian supersession, alimentary rhythm and ritual. A food central to Christian identity, especially because a refusal to consume it demarcated those who were not Christian, pork found its way into medieval narratives of conversion. When the child of a Jewish doctor who had become a Christian was abducted and forcibly circumcised, the Jews of Norwich who "reclaimed" the boy insisted to the Christian woman caring for him that he not

be fed pork while in her keeping. Their insistence that the child abstain from this staple of his former diet was also their announcement that the boy had been inalterably changed.¹⁰

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that some conservative activists in France—people who are fond of imagining a medieval purity of the French and of Europe that in fact never existed—have taken to offering pork-based soups to the poor of Paris and Nice in order to exclude impoverished Muslims and Jews from their charity.¹¹ Craig S. Smith has reported in the *New York Times* that this *soupe au cochon* has been rechristened “identity soup” by those who serve it.¹² Many of these volunteers belong to the extremist *Bloc Identitaire*, whose website is decorated with images of feral boars (and offers a recipe for the soup, along with a graphic of smiling pig’s head on a plate).¹³ *Bloc Identitaire* has released joyful press releases extolling the virtues of their soup, and their members frequently give interviews to the traditional and electronic French press.¹⁴ The “European solidarity feasts” that they stage have only one requirement for joining the table: “Eat pork.”¹⁵ This public performance of culinary (really, cultural) exclusion resonates all the more when it is kept in mind that during November 2005 France witnessed a wide-scale rioting that rendered the results of systematic historical exclusions amply evident. French employment Minister Gerard Larcher blamed the car burning and civic unrest on polygamous Muslims from Africa, while others insisted a bit more blandly that a refusal of immigrants to assimilate had spawned the chaos. (Many residents of France, it should also be noted, immediately condemned such arguments as racist; likewise, the *soupe au cochon* mission has been widely denounced, most notably by the mayor of Paris.)

The Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims of today’s Paris are not the same as the Jews, Christians, and Muslims of the Middle Ages. Yet pig soup and the lines of community and exclusion it is supposed to materialize really are part of the food’s enduring medieval temporality, now transported into a present day clearly haunted by medieval crusade (as violent legacy, as nostalgic fantasy). Spooning out dishes of pig soup will not bring about the secure boundaries and purified spaces of which *Bloc Identitaire*, *Le Front National*, and other far-right groups dream; it may even provoke violence (in anger over exclusion, in anger over the fact that the soup is not magically doing its demarcative job). This “traditional French” meal of pig flesh is served with a smarmy exuberance, and as if in perfect innocence (“La France n’est pas encore une république islamiste!” the racists declare sweetly, ladle in hand).¹⁶ Yet *la soupe au cochon* marks a grim return of medieval rhetorics of antisemitism and Islamophobia, a return of that struggle to make difference absolute and to order the world through violent exclusion, demonstrating the ways in which an object as seemingly inert as a bowl filled with pork can carry into the present its own little wrinkle in time.

Strange Bedfellows

Such temporal enfoldings, where past meets present and disrupts the linear chronology that is supposed to engender a transcendent future, have been a recurring focus of this book. *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages* is an admirably interhistorical project, sophisticated in its deployment of mixed chronologies. By focusing for a moment on contemporary France and a reawakening of medieval

struggles over dominance, truth, and voice, however, I would like to make the point that more work remains to be done in bringing about not only an ampler present for medieval studies, but also a more capacious past, one in which exclusions of Jews and Muslims (and heathens and heretics and the disabled) will cease so easily to repeat. The Middle Ages seldom offers us a model for diverse cultures or creeds cohabitating in peace. Yet the epoch does warn us what will likely be the outcome should we allow its violences and disidentifications to instigate again.

The medieval is queerly situated within the modern, at once intimate and unknown. This “extimate” positioning serves as an important reminder that the intertemporality articulated by this volume has an ally in queer theory, and with queer medievalists.¹⁷ With its emphasis on the “preposterous” and the historically impure, queer theory so presciently anticipates much of what is discussed here that I think it appropriate to end my afterword with a quotation from one of queer medievalism’s foremost practitioners: “Because the very basic idea that history lives, that even distant and relatively unexplored times and places are relevant to twentieth-century American lives, suggests sites of cultural relation that are unpredictable, uncontrollable . . . we can forge dynamic relations to the past, even the distant or unfamiliar past, even if at present we do not know where such relations will lead . . . using ideas of the past, creating relations with the past, touching in this way the past in our efforts to build selves and communities now and into the future.”¹⁸ Carolyn Dinshaw published those words in 1999, after reciting them on the conference circuit several years earlier. I had believed that this invitation to open up the present and future to queer cohabitation with the past was best being realized within postcolonial medieval studies, but this collection of essays on television, politics, and the Middle Ages convinces me that the ripples of its temporal turbulence have been considerably more extensive.

Notes

This essay took shape through conversations: with Jonathan Gil Harris (on objects and temporality), with Holly Dugan (on how something ephemeral might still possess a temporal archive), and with Karl Steel (on the polyvalence of animals, especially pigs, in medieval culture). I thank them for being such provocative interlocutors.

1. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
2. See Michael Uebel’s Otherword, “Opening Time: Psychoanalysis and Medieval Culture,” in this volume, for a psychoanalytic take on temporally-arrested “content value” versus a more mobile idea of historically contingent forms and structures that repeat over time.
3. Jonathan Gil Harris makes this point well in “Shakespeare’s Hair: Staging the Object of Material Culture,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 (2001): 479–91. See also the chapter “Time’s Machines” in my *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 1–34.
4. The idea that pigs function as “living storage devices for unpredicted surpluses” is taken from Manuel De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), p. 108. De Landa’s breathtaking—and Deleuzian—rendition of history is no doubt in the unconscious of much of my own writing about time.

5. Karl Steel has written an excellent Ph.D. dissertation on medieval food and identity that examines at great length the thorny problems posed by pigs that devour living and dead humans, "Defining the Human: Discourses and Practices of Animal Subjugation in the Middle Ages" (Columbia University, 2007). Some of his thinking in progress can be found on the medieval studies group weblog *In the Middle*; see, for example, <http://jjcohen.blogspot.com/2006/09/they-only-call-them-pigs-when-theyre.html>.
6. Gerald of Wales, *The Jewel of the Church* [*Gemma Ecclesiastica*], trans. John J. Hagen (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 1.18.
7. Robert Bartlett, "Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (TRHS)*, 6th series, 4 (1994): 59 [43–60]. I explore the material signifiers of medieval race at greater length in my book *Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 11–42.
8. Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 63–113.
9. The *Judensau* is a special and (during the Middle Ages) not especially widespread representation. For more on the animals with which Jews were typically allied representationally by Christians, see Anthony P. Bale, "Fictions of Judaism in England before 1290," in *The Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Skinner (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 129–44.
10. For an account of this case dating to 1230, see V. D. Lipman, *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1967), pp. 59–64.
11. For a lucid explication of the nonexistence of the love-object of these patriots, see Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
12. Craig S. Smith, "Poor and Muslim? Jewish? Soup Kitchen is Not for You," *The New York Times*, 28 Feb. 2006: A4. See also the discussion of the soup by Bashir Ebrahim-Khan in his essay "Is Islamophobia in Europe Leading to Another Holocaust?" *Muslim News*, 27 Jan. 2006, available at <http://www.muslimnews.co.uk>.
13. See *Bloc-Identitaire.com*, <http://www.bloc-identitaire.com>.
14. See, for example, the simultaneously obnoxious and frightening rhetoric in the interview with Odile Bonnivard, a member of *Bloc Identitaire*, archived as "*Au menu, soupe au cochon!*" *Novopress.info Paris*, 9 Dec. 2005, <http://paris.novopress.info/?p=1158>. The soup in question is said to be made with bacon, sausage, and pigs' tails, ears, and feet.
15. Smith quotes this information from *Bloc Identitaire.com* in "Poor and Muslim? Jewish? Soup Kitchen is Not for You."
16. See the press release archived at *Novopress.info Paris*, "Face à la soupe au cochon 'raciste,' des musulmans annoncent la Couscous Philanthropy!" <http://paris.novopress.info/novo-print.php?p=1286>.
17. See Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger's Introduction to *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. xi–xxiii, especially the section "History and a Logic of the Preposterous," pp. xi–xiv, as well as their individual contributions to the volume, "Shameful Pleasures: Up Close and Dirty with Chaucer" and "Medieval/Postmodern: HIV/AIDS and the Temporality of Crisis," respectively.
18. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 177 and 206.

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