Introduction

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FOR MUCH OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, the study of medieval society was identified with the study of Europe in the high medieval period. It had a few themes known to all: courtly society, feudalism, manorialism, the age of faith, scholastic learning, Gothic art, the new romances, and the like. There were well established introductory and transitional topics, such as the end of Rome, the settlement of barbarians in the west, the beginnings of Europe under the Carolingians, or the disasters of the fourteenth century. Almost all these topics are concerned with western Europe and describe its society. Nonetheless, the western emphasis of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or Henry Adams' *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1904) has been balanced in the learned imagination by Marco Polo's *Il Milione* or Washington Irving's *Legends of the Alhambra* (1832). An interest in the world outside the west has been part of defining the bounds of medieval society, which has meant that as long as there have been medieval studies there have been debates about topics such as antagonism or exchange with the Islamic world, the west's debts to Byzantium, European expansion during the Crusades, or trans-Saharan bullion flows. The present essays grow out of such traditional themes of European identity and its relations with others, but they pose new questions about medieval cultures in contact and view the topic from different perspectives. First, the starting point is no longer exclusively European, but often begins with other cultures, or with European groups formerly considered peripheral. Secondly, the emphasis is now on the meeting of cultures as a source of change.

Considerations of the relations between medieval Europeans and other societies have taken several forms in the past. Some have treated the question as secondary. For instance, in the debate about whether feudal society was the product of internal structural developments in the tenth and eleventh centuries, or originated in local responses to the ninth- and tenth-century Viking, Arab and Magyar incursions, neither school attached much importance to the culture of the invaders. Nationalist concerns meant that any discussion of cultural influence was contentious. In Spanish historiography of the Franco era, for instance, Américo Castro's claim that Spanish identity was formed from the living-together, the *convivencia*, of Muslims, Christians and Jews was countered by the arguments of Claudio Sánchez Albornoz and others that Spain's essential character was evident before the Arab invasion and persisted in the Reconquest's drive for unity. In English history, the nineteenth-century debate between A. E. Freeman and J. H. Round over the relative influence of resident Saxons or invading Normans on modern England resonated in the works of their successors through much of the twentieth century.

Nationalism aside, medievalists have often been open to explaining European developments as the result of external influences. Lynn White's work on scientific innovation and its social effects is an example in which the adoption of particular inventions or techniques came together in unique western circumstances to become eventually the west as we know it. Étienne Gilson and the students of scholastic thought gave credit to Islamic learning for its preservation of Greek thought. More recently Peter Dronke and Thomas Binkley have argued for the influences of Arabic love poetry and music on western courtly literature and music. Nonetheless, in each case the topic has been the development of northwestern European society.

The problem is particularly marked in considering the Islamic world, the great antagonist in western medieval histories from the eleventh century to Henri Pirenne. Works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) have alerted scholars to the divide between the religious concerns of Muslim scholars and the western secularism of an earlier generation

of European orientalists. The latter saw the former as unscientific and insular, while Muslim scholars now consider the orientalists to have been apologists for imperialism. The critique of the orientalists was not that they sought external explanations for European events, as was the case with some of the medievalists noted above, but that they posed irrelevant western questions about non-western topics.

More recently, the study of non-western societies for their effects on the west has changed to consideration of societies as separate and worth studying on their own. Such an approach is basic to comparative literature or the social sciences, the latter often beginning with independent case studies in order to arrive at general conclusions applicable to several societies. A similar respect for the internal histories of groups peripheral to the traditional view of medieval society has created a view of the western medieval past with many aspects, dissolving in particular the notion of a single western European society. With the increased interest in non-western groups in the own right and the recognition of multiple European perspectives, the study of cultures in contact is no longer limited to European contact with one group or another, with Europeans the common ground in each encounter.

The approach to cultures in contact running through several essays in this volume is that the meeting of cultures promotes historical change in the original societies and creates new hybrid societies at the point of contact. Of course, change can occur without the influence of cultural contacts, but the present essays are concerned with cultures in contact. They argue by their example that medievalists can search for understanding through comparisons. This approach recognizes the intrinsic interest in the study of individual cultures and does not deny internal agency. Most of the essays go, however, beyond comparison, which need not be historical or reflect any causal association between the compared items. They demonstrate that meaningful change is often a product of cultural contacts, and that the medieval world was rich in the meeting of cultures. Although the idea has been treated in the past, as the examples above show, it has rarely been as central an approach as it now

is. And it has rarely been allowed to stand on its own, as many of the present papers assume it must.

As a separate issue from the role of cultural influences on the societies of the medieval west, several papers study the cultures formed at the points of contact. It is a commonplace with its own traditions that border societies and cultures are different and interesting due to their position: frontier societies have meant self-reliance, independence, and virtue bred of conflict and necessity to scholars such as Charles Julian Bishko writing on the Iberian Christian peasants on the frontier with Islamic Spain. One of the lessons of the essays in this volume is that there are many other models, and many other ways to consider cultures in contact and the changes arising from such contacts.

In the first section of this volume, several essays consider the meeting of two cultures, or the reactions within one culture to many meetings. Several examine the effects on the imagination within a culture long after contact, and the contacts between disparate elements within a culture that thought itself undivided. Some analyze cultural contacts that give rise to new identities, or act as the formative influences on cultural development. The locales, periods and protagonists are as varied as the approaches. They include the origin of western Christian culture in Bede's England, the contact of east and west in the Islamic and Asian worlds, the western perceptions of the east in German literature, and Mediterranean studies, an area where the meeting of cultures was prominent. The relations between the Christian majority and the culture of the Jewish minority in northwestern Europe, and the interaction between the occupational cultures of minstrels and clerics are considered. The second section of the volume presents two models for teaching cultural contacts in the middle ages: one discusses the need to recognize such interactions as part of medieval history, and two linked essays show how literary diversity has been treated in practice.

The first essay in the first section, Carmela Viricillo Franklin's article, "Bilingual Philology in Bede's Exegesis," examines an aspect of the new culture formed from the meeting between classical and Christian Mediterranean cultures and those of the Germanic and Celtic north.

Most of the essays in the volume deal with the high and late medieval periods when travel, interchange and a sense of European identity were well established. In the later periods, European identity and its limits had forms with recognizable ties to early modern and modern attitudes. In the early medieval period, however, the world was different. The relations to a Roman past, the first thoughts of what Christian society implied, and the growth of local societies meant that thoughts about other cultures were cast in different forms.

Franklin's subject is one of the critical figures in this early period, the Venerable Bede. An Anglo-Saxon living a form of life, monasticism, developed in late-antique Egypt and sixth-century Italy, learned in Latin literature and Christian patristics far from the lands that had created both, Bede's formation and education repay consideration for what they can tell us about the adoption and adaptation of cultures. Bede's history of his people was an ecclesiastical history, which presents religious development in terms of the meeting of cultures and the triumph of Roman Christianity. The issue in the essay is Bede's reading of the Bible, and his careful commentaries on it. In 679-680, Ceolfrith, the abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow, had brought from Italy to the monastery a great pandect, or one-volume Bible, containing the *Vetus latina* translation from Greek. As part of what Bede describes as a self-conscious creation of a Roman church in England, over the next generation the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow prepared new pandects based on a different source, Jerome's Vulgate translated from Hebrew and Greek, but incorporating their own scholarship. Bede's philological exegesis, in the tradition of Augustine, found rich materials in comparing the Latin translations from the different sources, and in contrasting them with biblical quotations in patristic works. In his later work, Bede also compared the Latin text with Greek originals, but it is his inquiries through layers of sacred scripture that reveal his relation to distant cultures he sought to make his own.

The second theme in the volume, presented in essays by James Ryan, Sally McKee, Richard Gyug, Albrecht Classen and Linda Jones, are the relations between the medieval west, formed from the meeting of earlier

cultures, and its neighbors. James Ryan's essay, "Conversion or the Crown of Martyrdom," examines missionary activity, an instance of a self-conscious meeting of cultures. Although several essays in the volume argue that cultures were complex and communities could be defined in many ways, religious allegiance was a principal form of communal identification for many groups throughout much of the medieval period. There were many separate linguistic or ethnic cultures in the Christian west, but Crusades and missions were two forms of cultural contact in which western Europeans presented themselves as Christian and one. This was a definition based on an evangelical imperative and fostered by legends of missionary zeal in preaching to pagans in northern and western Europe during the early medieval period. Ryan argues, however, that it was the rise of Islam and the expectation of conflict formed during the Crusades that shaped later attitudes of the west toward religious contact, even when the circumstances differed.

Ryan's topic is the relations between fourteenth-century Christian missionaries and the cultures they encountered in the Chaghatai Khanate of Central Asia. The failure of the mendicant missionaries to leave many traces either at home or in Asia was the result of the attitudes they brought to their vocation. The experience of the Crusade period and the long-standing Islamic prohibitions against Christian proselytizing had taught the missionaries to expect challenge and conflict. Thus, wherever missionaries went, they went prepared to die as martyrs. Despite their heroic efforts, they were ill-equipped for any other reception, and unable to adapt when faced with such. Convinced of their superiority and bracing to defend it at any cost, they appear to have learned little from the lands they visited, and neither the west nor the east shared in the exchanges typical of some of the cultural contacts considered in the other essays.

The mendicant missions to Asia were striking and unusual points of contact between cultures, as were the Crusades that formed their model. More universal, and applying to cultures beyond the medieval west, were contacts arising through conquest and colonization, a topic addressed in Sally McKee's essay, "Speaking for Others: Imposing

Solidarities on the Past. The Case of Venetian Crete.” Although the issue is colonization, characterizations of the medieval west based on Crusades and missions has meant that religious allegiance is often taken as a defining element in such contacts. The relations between Venetians and Cretans have been discussed, therefore, in terms of religious-ethnic divisions, in which the preservation of ethnic identity was a cause of Cretan resistance. Contrasting the definitions presented in official records with the arrangements revealed in notarial instruments, McKee questions such analyses, and challenges one-dimensional notions of identity. Medieval polemicists, like their modern descendants, relied on relational terms to define ethnic identity: a group is defined by its boundaries with other groups. In official records and narrative travel-ogues, Cretans appear as hostile to the ruling Venetian minority. On the other hand, notaries recorded facts, or at least decisions, without the overt purpose of narratives or proclamations. In notarial registers, Cretan nobles, who in narrative sources lead the resistance and are always Greek, are seen in marriages with Venetians and in many acts of accommodation. Confrontation and tension were as likely to exist along the division between noble and peasant, or rural and urban dwellers, as between Cretan and Venetian. The root of the problem with modern descriptions of these complex relations lies in anachronistic applications of modern notions of identity and ethnicity to medieval culture. The hard and fast boundaries between groups familiar from simplified nationalist presentations are not to be assumed for medieval cultures.

A similar question of identity formation is posed in my essay, “The Church of Dubrovnik and the *Panniculus* of Christ: Relics between East and West (and Men and Women) in Medieval Dalmatia,” which concerns internal problems of assimilation and solidarity in a city straddling several cultural boundaries. Societies and cultures existing in border zones were places for the meeting of cultures, and for the definition of cultures in both exclusionary and inclusive terms. Medieval Dubrovnik lay between the Slavic east and the Latin west, between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The community was a polyglot entrepot for trade between the Balkans and Italy, and home to several linguistic and

religious cultures, including two groups of Roman Catholics, one using the Latin liturgy and the other using the vernacular Glagolitic liturgy. Nonetheless, later Ragusans of the Renaissance stressed the medieval city's harmony and stasis under a patrician elite proud of its Latin roots and Roman Catholicism. We can see this harmony as a fiction covering tensions resolved out of the public eye, especially since the legends recorded by later Ragusans point to several public conflicts based on the problems of assimilating the city's diverse population. The conflict analyzed in the essay concerns the nuns of S. Simeon who were custodians of the cloth used by Simeon the Prophet to hold the infant Christ at the Presentation in the Temple. The cloth brought miracles to women suffering difficult births until it was used to help a Serbian princess visiting Dubrovnik. This breach of Catholic solidarity led to a decline in the relic's efficacy, and eventually its seizure by the commune and translation to the cathedral. In this episode we see a hegemonic response to the problems of assimilation, one perpetuated by Ragusans in an attempt to preserve their small republic lying between larger societies.

The question of whether and to what extent the medieval definition of culture was tied to religious identity is considered also in Albrecht Classen's essay, "Medieval Europe and its Encounter with the Foreign World: Late-Medieval German Witnesses," in which Classen examines late medieval German literature for its treatment of outsiders. A common assumption has been that the structures, beliefs and values of western medieval society were closed, intolerant and suspicious of others, both those without, and several groups within, such as Jews, heretics and women. Thirteenth-century authors and audiences could, however, be intrigued by, attracted to, or tolerant of the distant foreigner. Wolfram von Eschenbach is shown to have been a noteworthy idealist who ignored race and downplayed religious identity in favor of universal human virtues, especially the chivalric virtues. In the nearly-contemporary epic *Herzog Ernst* (ca. 1220), the anonymous author describes a traveler who sees the mythical east in positive terms, except during moments of conflict. Later in the thirteenth century, Ulrich von dem

Türlin continued Wolfram's emphasis on humanistic tolerance: although the Saracen princess in his tale ends up converted and there is no doubt about Christian superiority, the Saracens are courtly and virtuous. In other words, difference need not be negative in itself, and ignorance of Christianity is not a vice. Classen asks whether similar views were held after the fall of Acre in 1291, or whether the closure of the east led to changes in values. The answer is that tolerance remained common: about 1300, the anonymous author of the crusade epic *Reinfried von Braunschweig* was still influenced by Wolfram's tolerant treatment of non-Christians. Early works continued to be copied and revised. In the popular printed adaptation of *Herzog Ernst*, the east became a sensational element, a means of attracting an audience through an emphasis on difference and distant without religious connotations or any trace of crusader antagonism. Even where the rhetoric of crusade and conflict survives, as in the anonymous chapbook *Fortunatus*, the events of the work stress adventure amid exotic courts, not eternal hatred.

Conquest, colonization, crusade and exchanges in border regions are obvious topics in considering medieval cultures in contact. A different approach, taken in Linda Jones's essay, "Dreams and Visions: A Comparative Analysis of Spiritual Charisms in Medieval Christian and Muslim Conversion Narratives," is the comparison of genres in different cultures. Such comparisons have the potential to raise questions about the structural roots of common practices, the possibility of shared origins, and the rationales for divergent practices. It was such commonalities or differences that impressed those who encountered cultures other than their own. The autobiographical conversion narratives of Christians and Muslims considered by Jones are sources in which definitions of culture could play a large role, because the narratives are concerned explicitly with leaving the world of one culture and entering another. Conversion narratives are also striking for their immediacy and their concern with profound experience. Although the Muslim and Christian traditions of conversion narratives developed independently, in both traditions the intensity of such changes of conviction marked them as divine in origin, best expressed in dreams

and visions. Despite the personal nature of conversion, the common goal of instruction means that both traditions use rhetorical devices and formulaic elements. The formulas differ, however, in each culture. Thus, Christian authors address the narratives to God or the Virgin Mary while Muslims address their co-religionists. More significantly, the Christian authors associated conversion with confession and redemption, whereas the Muslims list God's blessings and the parallels between their lives and the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Such differences highlight the different expectations of the narratives' audiences. Similarities in the accounts, such as the use of dreams and visions to signal and describe inspiration, suggest that although there are few indications of common origins or direct influence between Muslim and Christian narratives, they both stand within a post-classical tradition that assigned priority to a spiritual world.

Most of the essayists consider themes of identity and cultural formation in terms of religious identity, but economic rationales such as those considered by Alan Stahl in his essay, "Venetian Commerce in the Later Middle Ages: Feast or Famine?" often provided the context for contact. The missionaries described by Ryan were not merchants, but they were near contemporaries of merchants such as the Polos who traveled the same routes. The patricians of Dubrovnik in my essay used their religious identity in support of security and commerce. Venetian Crete analyzed by McKee was part of a trade empire. Even the monastic world of Bede had close ties to growing Anglo-Saxon kingdoms drawing wealth from a north-sea trading zone. That religious authors left more eloquent and self-conscious reflections on cultural identity is not to deny the importance of social and economic contacts. Indeed, the exchanges of traders, migrants and merchants were probably more influential in the long term than the cultural contacts of their religious contemporaries. With trade came circumstances that could affect cultures, including residency in foreign lands, legal accommodations between diverse systems, the recognition of common interests, and, of course, conflict. Economic relations are, therefore, the context for such issues as the revolutionary contacts made by Iberian voyagers of the fifteenth century

and the contacts made during the European expansion of the high medieval period, of which the Crusades were only a part.

The reform of the Venetian mint in 1417 and the failure of the reforms are Stahl's starting point in demonstrating changes caused by changes in trade and its financing. In the early fifteenth century, Venetian trade was growing, but silver and gold imports for the Venetian mint were declining. The failed reform was an attempt to re-establish the supply of coins needed to pay for goods, especially spices, in the Levant. The shortfall in metal imports appears to have been made up by developing new trade in the west and carrying more goods, especially textiles, from Europe to the east. Contrary to Doge Mocenigo's famous deathbed oration, which is probably spurious (as Stahl has shown elsewhere), expansion in Europe was the basis for the ongoing success of Venetian trade in the east.

The essays described above examine contacts between cultures associated with ethnic, religious or linguistic groups from different regions, a definition of culture based on the nineteenth-century identification of a nation and its people. The divisions within western European society also provide grounds for the meeting of cultures, as is demonstrated in essays by Jennifer Goodman and Evelyn Birge Vitz. Goodman's essay, "*Quidam de Sinagoga*: the Jew of the *Jeu d'Adam*," considers the interplay between literary works and their audiences, and the tension between cultural divisions and demands for assimilation. Near the end of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Jeu d'Adam*, the prophet Isaiah is challenged by an anonymous speaker coming out of the synagogue. The play has presented many problems, including difficulties in localizing it and analyzing its structure. The brief intervention of *quidam de sinagoga* has not hitherto received much attention, but Goodman argues that it is central to the play's purpose. The scene and the play make full sense only when an audience including Jews is posited. Casting aside the assumption of a uniform Christian audience, an assumption which lies behind the literary criticism of most works in the western vernaculars, opens new windows on the purpose and structure of the play. The Jew's resistance and hostility to Isaiah can

now be seen as the true moment of catharsis. The vernacular could provide the means of communication suitable for a mixed audience with a common daily language but distinct learned languages, Latin and Hebrew. The possibility of a mixed audience resolves the question of the play's localization in favor of northern France, where there were suitable Jewish communities. It also fits the context of twelfth-century Christian proselytizing and disputations. The Christian author does not demonize the Jews, but considers them incomplete Christians in need of persuasion in order to make them repent. For the dramatist, a division in medieval culture is healed by defining away the history of the minority to make it part of the majority's religious viewpoint.

Within medieval society, classes, occupations or genders could also be divided into groups with distinct cultures and common experiences. Culture is, of course, a term broad enough to include group identities of many sorts. Confrontation, misunderstanding, exchange and interdependence are not confined to meetings between diverse ethnic groups, as Evelyn Birge Vitz makes clear in her essay "Minstrel Meets Clerk in Early French Literature: Medieval Romance as the Meeting-Place Between Two Traditions of Verbal Eloquence and Performance Practice," an analysis of the relations between two professions in medieval France. Minstrels and clerics had much in common: both were attached to courts, addressed the same courtly audience, and sought to entertain their patrons. They were, however, distinct in training and were considered distinct by themselves and others, with clerics claiming literacy and authorship, and the minstrels performance, as their branches of entertainment. Usually the creation of romance is ascribed to clerics, but Vitz argues that romance was a product of contact between the clerics and minstrels in the setting of twelfth-century courts. Clerics wrote the romances, and minstrels performed them before audiences. Romances were not intended for silent reading. Their clerical authors were guided, therefore, by the needs of minstrels, who collaborated in the work of art as performance. The case is supported by instances from French and Anglo-Norman court circles of literate minstrels reading clerical works of other genres and probably composing the works they

performed. There were also clerics writing works in which oral sources are cited and the conventions of courtly performance are kept in mind. The collaboration between the cultures of cleric and minstrel united clerical learning and the skills of minstrels to create a hybrid work – romance – unlike what either culture had produced before.

The second section of the volume examines how the lessons of the many cultural contacts discussed in the earlier essays could be used in classrooms. The topic of cultural contacts is fundamental for medievalists, whose period of study includes, for instance, the origins of medieval societies in the post-classical world, the expansion of the new medieval religions, Islam and Christianity, the meeting of cultures around the Mediterranean, and the interplay of cultures within medieval society. Medievalists interested in teaching such topics are faced, however, with texts and curricula shaped by national histories, communal histories, and the traditional vision of a unified western European culture, all of which are likely to stress continuity, internal change or exclusionary definitions. National histories have further limited the possibilities for teaching cultures in contact by their neglect of other histories, thus leaving students and academics with unbalanced perspectives and gaps in their knowledge of the many parts of the medieval world.

Louise Marlow and Kathryn Lynch in their essays, “Team Teaching the Literature of the European and Islamic Middle Ages,” reflect on the difficulties and rewards they have experienced at Wellesley College in teaching a course called “Images of the Other in the European and Islamic Middle Ages.” Marlow, writing on “The Islamic Perspective,” and Lynch on “The European Perspective” comment on practical concerns: the relation of such a course to their departments and the faculty, the need to demonstrate relevance, the lack of source materials in translation, especially for non-western topics, and the problem of providing students with basic historical and cultural contexts before addressing the literature. Even making comparisons could be challenging when genres differed. Lynch notes, however, that such a course provided fruitful educational opportunities for both students and professors. The latter have often been trained in disciplinary fields, and teach and

conduct research in specialized sub-fields. For European medievalists, a term spent reading Islamic literature and travel narratives could shed fresh light on their own fields, as could consideration of the differing theoretical perspectives. One of the great organizational advantages of such a course was its multi-cultural content, which would address many colleges' needs. For the students, the questions of cultures in contact considered in many of the current essays found an ideal place for discussion in Lynch and Marlow's course on the literature of the larger medieval world.

The study of cultures in contact is one of several trends in medieval studies not reflected in an older curriculum, or in texts based on the older curriculum. One goal in teaching medieval subjects is, therefore, to assimilate the lessons learned from the study of cultural change into the curriculum. Teofilo Ruiz addresses this desire in his essay, "Center and Periphery in the Teaching of Medieval History." Ruiz notes that teaching surveys while doing justice to topical research now involves consideration of women's studies, minority cultures and the vast silent majority of medieval people outside the elite. The problem for teachers of surveys has been particularly acute in such practical concerns as the supply of texts and sources. In this case, the medium of instruction is too often at odds with the purposes of the instructors. Ruiz notes that source books, a student's first access to the thoughts and lives of the medieval period, emphasize political, institutional and intellectual history, not the new fields of cultural history. They are also concerned with the center, not the peripheries being considered in cultural contacts. Peripheries when treated at all are poorly integrated adjuncts to the main story. The problem is compounded by the economics of source-book publication, because most texts are reproduced from out-of-copyright nineteenth-century translations, thus ensuring a dated curriculum. Ruiz calls, therefore, for new texts to reflect topical concerns, the integration of the artifacts of medieval society into courses, and the relation of course content to extra-curricular concerns. A model of what can be done at a practical level is Paul Halsall's *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* (www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html): it provides the older translations

at no charge and supplements them with translations of works suited to contemporary interests.

The title “Medieval Cultures in Contact” covers a wide range of themes and topics, from the formation of the medieval west in the meeting of cultures, to the contacts between the exclusionary cultures of Christianity and Islam, the problems of identity formation and cultural distinction, and the meeting of diverse classes and groups within western medieval society. The essays share common ground in their emphasis on the creative results possible in the meeting of cultures, the intrinsic interest in studying the margins that define a culture’s limits, and the diverse elements in a period often assumed to be unitary. Scholars have long recognized that the culture of western society did not stand alone in the medieval period, but the essays point to ways in which this recognition can be amplified and taught to others.

“Medieval Cultures in Contact” is the first publication in the series *Fordham Essays in Medieval Studies*. The general editor of the series, H. Wayne Storey, has been a constant source of encouragement and guidance. He was also the organizer of the Fordham medieval conference “Cultures in Contact” held on March 22, 1997, at which many of the authors presented earlier versions of the essays published here. The executive committee of Fordham’s Center for Medieval Studies proposed the series and has provided assistance and advice for this volume. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Fordham generously supported the conference. Of course, it is the enthusiasm of medievalists for their discipline and their commitment to new directions that lies behind the volume and the series. They are its inspiration.