



## In the Middle

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*Things do not begin to live except in the middle.*

—Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*

### A land of unlikeness

The English novel *The Go-Between* (1953) begins a tale of memory and loss with two sentences a historian could love: “The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there.”<sup>1</sup> The novel’s narrator should know: he is a librarian, someone who, as the memory ghost of his twelve-year-old self will remind him, spends his days cataloguing the relics of the book-past. And many who now live with the past for a living might nod in recognition: the metaphor slips on comfortably, like a well-worn shoe. The past can feel like a place as much as it does a time—a *foreign* place, outside the doors of the familiar, beyond the gate and the gatekeepers of the *now*.

Especially beyond the pale is the Middle Ages, definitional whipping boy for generations of citizens of the present who have needed an “all-purpose alternative” against which to define themselves.<sup>2</sup> The difference of medieval doing is embedded already in the names we still give the time: the “Middle Ages” makes parenthetical death of the interval between Classical life and its humanist “rebirth.” “Premodern” gives life only in anticipation of the modern, directing the period toward a telos of recognizability in the *now* that the premodern, as such, will always fail to satisfy.

The Middle Ages were invented to be a foreign country.<sup>3</sup> The indigenous peoples are dead, and they didn’t even know they were medieval—they thought they were living in modern times. They thought it was now: “There is no other age than ours,” Raymond de l’Aire of Tignac told the inquisitors nosing for heresy in his town around 1320.<sup>4</sup>

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But *this* is “now,” and there are elements about the “Middle Ages” that feel foreign—foreign in this modern, postmodern, or maybe even post-postmodern land we still call “now.” Everyone who has ever read a medieval book cold or taught one to cold undergraduates has felt this foreignness intimately in his or her suddenly awkward flesh. All those quotations, all that Catholicism, all those arguments and counterarguments; not to mention those old words, weird verb forms, erratic spelling, and all that damn Latin.

There’s no question that the Middle Ages is an other, perhaps even a foreign place, someplace, as the etymology indicates, beyond our own doors (from *foris* “out of doors, outside”). What are we doing when we go there? What happens to “here” and “there” when we go? The question isn’t whether medieval people did things differently than we do now; the question is what we as putative nonmedievales are going to do with the difference. What stories do we tell ourselves about it? What do they do to and for us?

When medievalists talk about medieval otherness, it can feel like a slap in the face; it can feel like a come-on; it can of course be both at once. Take, for example, Paul Zumthor’s monumental *Essai de poétique médiévale*. Published in 1972, the *Essai* set medieval poetry in dialogue with what was then high literary theory. The dialogue made the foreignness of medieval poetry accessible to a mid-1980s graduate student like me; it taught me that medieval texts could be active participants in the theoretical discussions I was learning to have with friends, professors, and texts. Returning to the *Essai* (published in English in 1992 as *Toward a Medieval Poetics*) now with the theory-midwifed births of “New Philology” and “New Medievalism” in the past, I was surprised to find that this text that I thought bridged temporal gaps begins by blowing up more bridges than it builds. “We are cut off from the Middle Ages by a divide that we should not attempt to ignore, but that we should rather see as an impassible abyss,” Zumthor announces in his second paragraph.<sup>5</sup> Why, then, even write the book, students I once read this with wanted to know, and it’s a good question. “To be a medievalist is not a self-evident achievement,” Zumthor might answer, with the beleaguered scholar of his retrospective *Speaking of the Middle Ages*.<sup>6</sup>

Some experts offer themselves as guides into this other country, declaring, as they do so, that bad roads and worse light are what make the experts necessary: “Without a guide, any person who attempts to satisfy anything beyond the most ordinary curiosity about medieval subjects is quite apt to become entangled in a maze of compartmentalized specifics,”

begins a recent introduction to the study of manuscripts. “It is difficult not to get lost. Bibliographically the age is hazy gray, conjuring up mystical and enticing promise, as in the half-light moments just preceding dawn.”<sup>7</sup> Here, specialization crooks an enticing finger through what *Toward a Medieval Poetics* calls “the mists of time,”<sup>8</sup> offering a trip into an intellectual world off-putting and arcane, yet exotic in its very half-lit and seductive abstruseness.

A reader even noddingly familiar with Edward Said’s *Orientalism* will recognize in this “Middle Ages” the Orient of colonialist discourse, the Other figured as veiled woman, mystical and enticing. In fact, it doesn’t take much editorial tweaking for *Orientalism* to speak of medieval studies. Just read “Medievalist” for Said’s “Orientalist,” “Middle Ages” for his “Orient,” and “the present” for his “Europe,” as I have done here:

For decades the Medievalists had spoken about the Middle Ages, they had translated texts, they had explained civilizations, religions, dynasties, cultures, mentalities—as academic objects, screened off from the present by virtue of their inimitable foreignness. The Medievalist was an expert . . . whose job in society was to interpret the Middle Ages for his compatriots. The relationship between Medievalist and Middle Ages was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely understandable civilization or cultural monument, the Medievalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object.<sup>9</sup>

Given this hermeneutic similarity between medievalism and orientalism, it seems that work with and around “otherness” in anthropology and (post)-colonial studies might be an excellent companion for thinking through methodological and ethical issues in medieval studies. The *Annales* historians taught us that the great mass of people in Europe all the way up to the Reformation was only superficially Christianized, living under the “missionary” rule of Roman Catholicism,<sup>10</sup> so we’re not far off if we think of medieval people as in some sense colonized even in their own lifetimes. And once we start thinking about the relation between medieval people and the nonmedievales who might take it in mind to write, think, make movies, novels, poems, or advertisements about them, then we see colonial paradigms even more strongly: if the Middle Ages hadn’t existed, people might have had to invent them, just so that we could safely be non-

medieval, and have someplace exotic to fly to when modern life got too, well, modern. Or so that we could have a convenient Other against which to define ourselves.

Colonial and postcolonial theory does indeed help us see important things about the Middle Ages and about the practice of medieval studies. But I don't want to appropriate or apply it. For one thing, the knowledge/power activities of the two disciplines in the world of the living are incommensurable in ethically crucial ways: medievalism will never affect the lives of medieval people as Orientalism has affected and continues to affect the lives of living people. In addition, any theory's creative reach is limited if it is used instrumentally, applied to a medieval body imagined as inert object by a theory-wielding *sujet-supposé-à-savoir*. And if we're taking colonial and postcolonial theory seriously, we should be especially troubled by the modernizing agenda implicit in the *application* of theory, as if theory's task were to bring marginal medievalism up to date and integrate it into the intellectual life of the academic metropolis. Such a gesture rings uncannily with the modernizing mission of colonialism: it reaches down to take up the theoretician's burden, to bring theory to the backward.

I do not want to do that here. The eyes that read these medieval texts and the mind that asks questions about their otherness have been taught to read by theory (medieval, modern, postmodern), including anthropological and postcolonial studies. I want to summon those eyes, that mind, to work difference and be worked by it in my reading. I'll seek a model for relation to the past that allows for and encourages the very particular and concrete liveliness of two historical moments, of past and present, attempting to avoid what Jameson called the "ideological double bind between antiquarianism and modernizing 'relevance' or projection."<sup>11</sup> For all its "common-sense" resonance, "the past is a foreign country" may not be a helpful model, for the submetaphors it generates implicate it tightly in Jameson's double bind: If the past is a foreign country, what are we who spend so much time in it? Anthropologists? Archaeologists? Tourists? Colonists? Orientalists? Go-betweens?<sup>12</sup> Perhaps I need another model, another way to think the relation between then and now. To find one, I will read, and reading, as Zumthor says, "is a practice, realizing the union of our thought with this thing it accepts, perhaps provisionally, as real."<sup>13</sup> These "things," for me, here, are the texts of the Latin Middle Ages, in their manuscript and edited bodies. Zumthor, who dizzied me and my students with the impassable abyss that separates us from the Middle Ages, also reminds us how we can start engaging with the differences between us and the "things" we read.

Thus, reading is, at least potentially, a dialogue; but in it two agents confront one another: I am in some way produced by this text, and in the same moment, as a reader, I construct it. A relationship of active solidarity rather than a mirror-effect; a solidarity promised rather than given, pleasurably felt at the end of the long preparatory work required by the traversing of two historical distances, going and coming back.<sup>14</sup>

“I am in some way produced by this text”: What would it feel like to be colonized by the Middle Ages?

### **And I said, “Here”**

I am sitting in the reading room at the Newberry Library in the summer of 1998. On the table in front of me, propped up and open by the gentle racks and velvet snakes of the archive, is a copy of Augustine’s *Confessions* from the second half of the twelfth century, once owned by the Abbey of St. Mary’s, Reading (Newberry MS 12.7). I am reading it. And amazed, for starters, to find myself *reading* it, without dictionary or pony, reading it, I think to myself, “like a regular book.” And as I read, I notice that someone is reading with me: there’s a medieval reader here, who marks passages he likes with a compact calligraphic “NOTA” flourished in the margins.<sup>15</sup> There he is, a couple of times a chapter. I start to notice what he’s marking. He seldom varies from his terse command to “notice” text, but something happens at Augustine’s portrait of his friendship with an unnamed youth, and the story of his friend’s death (*Confessions* 4.4). “Hic tangit fabula[m] quanda[m] de ORESTE & pilade in amicitia copulatis” [Here it (or he) touches on the story of Orestes and Pylades, joined in friendship] he comments (fol. 22r); he is warming to the topic, chaining it in memory to the stories of other exemplary friends. So warm to the friendship is he that he doesn’t read carefully; eager to give this friend (like Augustine’s female lover, pointedly unnamed in the *Confessions*) a name, he has written “NEBRIDIUS” in neat capitals at the beginning of the story (fol. 21r). And when the friend dies, the annotator becomes eloquent: first a “NOTA” and then the full comment, “Gemit[us] seu q[ue]rimonia s[an]c[t]i AUGUSTINI de obitu amici sui NEBRIDII” [the groaning or lamentation of Saint Augustine at the death of his friend Nebridius].<sup>16</sup>

I read this and shivered. In a mixture of hard scholarship and intense, almost hallucinatory imagination, I am *here* with this dead man’s reading. I want to know: What was this reader thinking as he cut his pen

before that day's reading? What had he had for breakfast? What did the desk feel like under his forearm? What did the book smell like? What kind of light fell across the page: candle? daylight? Was it gray or clear outside that window? What was the name of the friend *he'd* loved and lost? I stop reading sequentially and start looking for my favorite passages, to see what he thinks of them. At the vision at Ostia (*Confessions* 9.10), there he is, a bit sloppier than usual, but *there*, by the passage that always makes me weep.

What happened here is worth thinking about. The commentator and I are bound together by our common intense response to a shared material object—appropriately enough, a book about someone who reacted to *his* reading with similar intensity. In my own case, the response seems to have been a powerful compound of sympathy (feeling *with* another's feeling) and empathy (*Einfühlung*, feeling *into* another person),<sup>17</sup> “a relationship of active solidarity rather than a mirror-effect,” as Zumthor might say.<sup>18</sup> I was present at some moment of reading, and it was both my own moment—a late July afternoon at the Newberry Library in Chicago, the ghost of a noodle lunch hovering in memory, my laptop whirring quietly on the table—and the commentator's. There was a present, a moment of reading, that present that Augustine says—and that the medieval commentator (“my” reader, I almost called him) must have read him saying—has no duration.

In fact the only time that can be called present is an instant, if we can conceive of such, that cannot be divided even into the most minute fractions, and a point of time as small as this passes so rapidly from the future to the past that its duration is without length. For if its duration were prolonged, it could be divided into past and future. When it is present it has no duration.

[si quid intellegitur temporis, quod in nullas iam vel minutissimas momentorum partes dividi possit, id solum est quod praesens dicatur; quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum; praesens autem nullum habet spatium.]<sup>19</sup>

I was at once a late-twentieth-century subject and no subject at all, with no time at all beyond the time that this reading made. The commentator called a name, and I said, “Here.”

This is all true, yet this, too, is true: the person who wrote those notes is not now “my” reader, and certainly was not “my” reader at the moment he dipped his pen and wrote. His lived experience is radically unlike

mine, and mine unlike his, separated by almost infinite variables of time, space, culture, and experience. I can never know what he was feeling at that or any other moment. I cannot build a reasoned argument from whatever I may feel happened in that reading room in Chicago that afternoon. I was on that afternoon, and still am, a North American woman raised in the late twentieth century, with a historically and culturally particular set of needs and desires that shape my reading of this person reading Augustine, and, perhaps more importantly, with a historically and culturally particular “subjectivity” that shapes even the way in which I felt that subjectivity to drop away.

I can say that this is true: I was reading a very old, handwritten copy of a book about reading, the self, and self-loss, and there came a moment in which “I” and “other,” “subject” and “object” simply ceased to be adequate categories through which to think about the relation between reader and read, present and past. Intellectual analysis will come later, and it will insist on the deep difference between “Catherine Brown” and the commentator of Newberry MS 12.7, but it will also be driven by the remembered energy of that moment when two historical live wires crossed—my present and the commentator’s—and changed both me and what I was reading. I’ll never teach or read *The Confessions* in the same way again. In a very real sense, no medieval text will ever be the same again.

### **A roll-call in reverse**

In the Newberry that July afternoon two apparently contrary things were true at once: the commentator is long dead, lost to me in time; the commentator is my con-temporary, with me in time. I can’t exactly say that we shared time, since he’s dead and has no time for me, but time was nonetheless shared: in that moment of reading, his words, the sense-making of them, and I were coincident in space and time. Medieval he may be; he is also, and equally, *coeval*.

I’ve learned this term from the anthropologist Johannes Fabian, who uses it in his *Time and the Other* to indicate “the *problematic* simultaneity of different, conflicting, and contradictory forms of consciousness” that structures anthropological fieldwork.<sup>20</sup> To write about people different from themselves, anthropologists must live with them, share time and space with them. Yet, Fabian argues, the metaphorical models for cultural difference in classical anthropology bypass, even evade coevalness and its troubling epistemological implications, figuring cultural difference as distance in space and especially distance in time. Thus, difference in culture (“people x do things this way”)

becomes distance in space (“people x live in region y, and they do things differently there”), which becomes difference in time (“people x are primitive”).

“The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there.” We might now think we recognize the spatio-temporal maneuvering of Fabian’s anthropologists in Hartley’s epigrammatic lines, but if we sit down to read the book, and look *at* the words instead of *through* them to the commonplace, we find that *The Go-Between* is going someplace rather different. “The past is a foreign country”: difference in time is spatialized. The binary ratios implicit here (past/present, foreign/native, they/we, differently/similarly) work to isolate the past into a land of unlikeness. However, the verb, core of the sentence’s life, works in a different direction: “they *do* things differently”—and they do them *in the present*. First spatialized, the past has now been made present.<sup>21</sup>

Something similar happens when a scholar writing about a medieval text finds herself with her material in the historical present (“Augustine says . . .” or “Hartley opens his book with these famous sentences . . .”). Like Fabian’s fieldworkers, readers and the objects they read are, as long as reading happens, cotemporal and cospatial. When I read Newberry MS 12.7, I shared an object and the space it created with earlier readers of the same object. The “same” object: this at once is, and is not true. I can say that this is the “Augustine” the commentator read: his fingers warmed this piece of parchment that mine warm now; I see the red initial that he saw. Yet there are now annotations on that page that he never knew, ownership marks he couldn’t imagine.<sup>22</sup> The book’s been rebound, and it must smell differently than it did when he read and wrote; the chemical composition of its pages and the ink and sweat upon them has certainly changed over time.

Pushing a little further, we can hold the same double truth for reading a “medieval” text in a “modern” edition: this three-volume set from Oxford at once is and is not the “*Confessions*.” I am simultaneous with something historically not-me both when I read the *Confessions* in O’Donnell’s edition *and* when I read it in Pine-Coffin’s translation: I am still, that is to say, in the middle, in “my” place yet also not in place, though the terms of the mediation vary. What matters for me, when I think about this coeval encounter, is not the search for some unmediated “authenticity”; rather, it’s the conscious embrace of mediation, of the dynamics of relation and exchange. The works we read may be “medieval,” but when we read them, they’re coeval as well, and in that reading vibrates a “*problematic* simultaneity of different, conflicting, and contradictory forms of consciousness.”<sup>23</sup> What is made in this simultaneity? What stories will the living reader tell him- or herself about this coeval encounter with another time?



Here's the story Hartley's narrator begins to tell. It's not a story yet, but rather a collection of objects whose relevance to the epigrammatic opening that immediately precedes them isn't immediately apparent.

When I came upon the diary it was lying at the bottom of a rather battered red cardboard collar-box, in which as a boy I kept my Eton collars. Someone, probably my mother, had filled it with treasures dating from those days. There were two dry, empty sea-urchins; two rusty magnets, a large one and a small one, which had almost lost their magnetism; some negatives rolled up in a tight coil; some stumps of sealing-wax; a small combination lock with three rows of letters; a twist of very fine whip cord, and one or two ambiguous objects, pieces of things, of which the use was not at once apparent: I could not even tell what they had belonged to.<sup>24</sup>



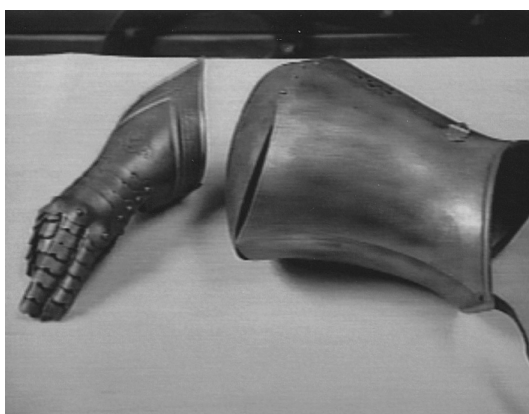
As a reader sits before an object—say a glossed and mended manuscript—so the narrator, Leo Colston, sits with a box of what he’s just about to call “relics.” What they “mean,” even what they are, he cannot tell.



The relics were not exactly dirty nor were they quite clean, they had the patina of age; and as I handled them, for the first time in over fifty years, a recollection of what each had meant to me came back, faint as the magnets’ power to draw, but as perceptible. Something came and went between us: the intimate pleasure of recognition, the almost mystical thrill of early ownership—feelings of which, at sixty-odd, I felt ashamed.

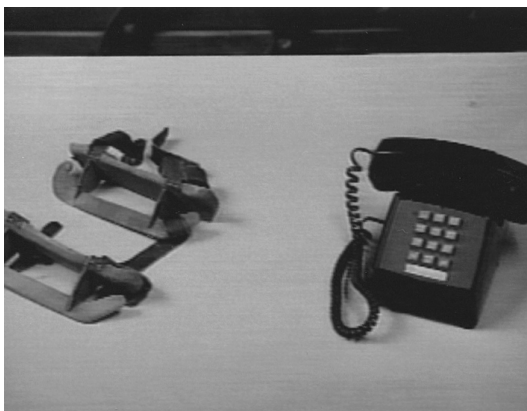
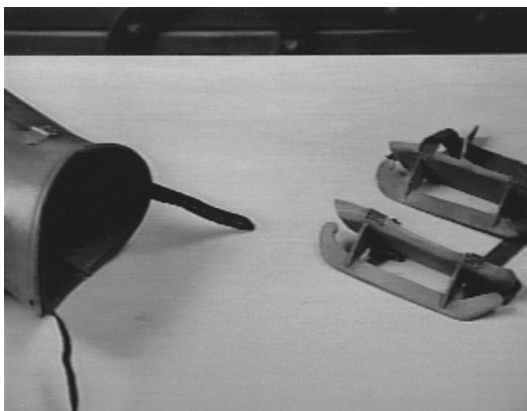


At first it seems as if Colston’s meaning-making from the objects is entirely appropriative: things which at first seemed arbitrary, nonsensical, and “other” are re-possessed by his claiming touch, from recollection to recognition to ownership.<sup>25</sup> But then he glosses for us, and explains, and his explanation blurs the neat boundaries of subject and object, owner and owned that we’ve just been led to construct. “It was a roll-call in



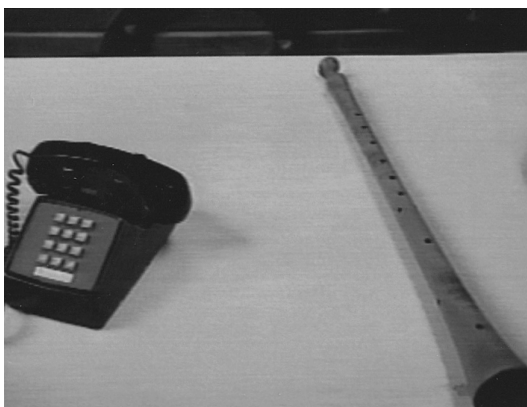
reverse,” he explains; “the children of the past announced their names, and I said ‘Here.’”<sup>26</sup>

The roll call is a ritualized interpellation: the subject—the teacher—calls the names, and the objects—the children—accept interpellation by responding, “Here” or, perhaps, “Present.” But here the poles of inventorier and inventoried are reversed, the interpellation confused. Colston answers each object as if he himself were the object of its call, almost as if he were the object itself. For an instant, as he reknows each object, Colston becomes it, answers for himself and for it at the same time, and with the same cospatial, cotemporal word, “Here.” Only the diary, first object in the series, remains recalcitrantly other, “refus[ing] to disclose its identity,” and of course it’s the diary that’s both most important and most intimately Colston(’s) of every object in the box, and the object that generates the story that becomes *The Go-Between*.



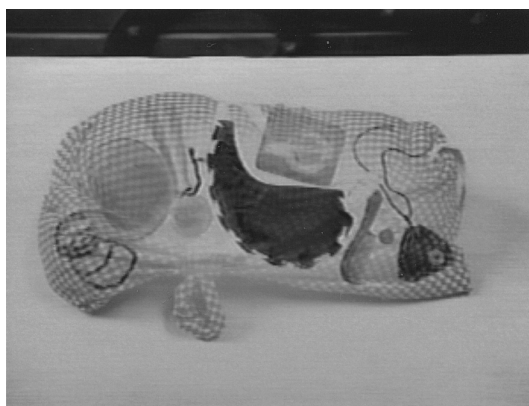
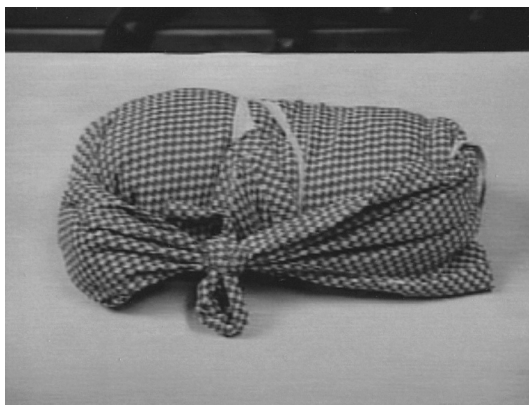
### **And you shall be changed into me**

Drafting the story of my encounter with Newberry MS 12.7 and imagining its future readers, I wondered if the experience was, if not an archive feverdream, then perhaps a manifestation of what Dominick La Capra calls the “archive fetish”: “The archive as fetish is a literal



substitute for the ‘reality’ of the past which is ‘always already’ lost for the historian. . . . It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience

of the thing itself.”<sup>27</sup> Mystification, I told myself severely, not legitimate material for a modern scholarly article.



A modern scholar is concerned primarily with getting the text objectively “right,” treating it as an ultimate and sole authority. We are taught to “legitimate” our reading (by which we mean our interpretation or understanding) solely by the text; we see ourselves as its servants, and although the possibility and the utility of such absolute objectivity have been called into question many times during this century, this attitude remains a potent assumption in scholarly debate.<sup>28</sup>

My reading of Newberry MS 12.7 was certainly illegitimate in the modern sense that Mary Carruthers describes here: I wasn’t serving the text, nor did I have any concern for getting anything right about it beyond perhaps the letter forms and grammar. Something else was going on there: what happened wasn’t primarily about Catherine learning things about or from the past. It wasn’t “archive fetishism” either, really: this was not an experience about

desiring the “thing itself”; it was about a relation of exchange that blurred and confused the concepts on which modern notions of “objectivity” and

“archive fetishism” are built: the monadic subject and object, even the very idea that there could be such a thing as the “thing itself.” There wasn’t much, really, that was modern about it. “A medieval scholar’s relationship to his texts,” Carruthers goes on to say, speaking of a medieval reader now, not a modern medievalist, “is quite different from modern ‘objectivity.’”<sup>29</sup>

Medieval readers don’t read the way we do; they do things differently. One way to embrace coevalness with them would be to learn to read from them, in that in-between state where polarities (subject/object, self/Other, now/then) are confused, where simultaneous, apparently conflicting truths can be equally in effect, where things really begin to live.

In Petrarch’s *Secretum*, St. Augustine leaps from his late antique “then” into Petrarch’s fourteenth-century “now,” in part to teach the poet how to read. “Efficere tibi illas familiares,” he says, make those texts familiar to you, and he means “familiar” literally—make them as your family, your own flesh and blood.<sup>30</sup> To make the text familiar is to have it in your veins, to belong to and with it, to make it yours and vice versa. The most vivid figures at a medieval or a modern hand for such intimate mixing and exchange come from the alimentary and the erotic. “What is this letter that you read in the Gospels,” asks Beatus of Liébana in the late eighth century, “but the body of Christ, the flesh of Christ, which is eaten by Christians? And it is eaten when it is read and when it is heard” [Quid est haec littera quam in Evangelio legis vel in caeteris Scripturis sanctis, nisi Corpus Christi, nisi caro Christi, quae ab omnibus christianis comeditur? et tunc comeditur, quando legitur, et quando auditur].<sup>31</sup> Reading is eating for Beatus, and in eating, the body eaten and the body eating become one.

Thus we, in our wholeness, eat a whole book; and our body, which is Christ’s body, is joined with Christ, its head; one being, whole and complete, and we are with him one person.

[Tunc et nos integri, et librum integrum manducamus; et corpus nostrum, quod est corpus Christi cum Christo capite iungimur qui integer et perfectus, et cum illo una persona sumus.]  
(*Apologeticum* 1.110; 824)

Intellectual activity in general and reading in particular is figured by medieval exegetical writers as a kind of eating, and it can come incarnate in intensely somatic form. So it is in the Bible, where so many of them learned to read: Psalm 44 begins, “My heart belched forth a good word” [Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum], which St. Jerome glosses thus:



The belch, literally, is the digestion of food, and the blowing out in wind of digested food. For as the belch breaks from the stomach according to the quality of the food, which is indicated by the good or foul smell of the wind, so the cogitations of the inner man are brought forth in words, and “from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” [Matt. 12:34]. The just man, eating, fills his soul, and when he is replete with sacred teaching, he offers good things from the treasure-house of his good heart, and he says with the Apostle, “Do you seek a proof of Christ who speaks in me?” [2 Cor. 13:3].

[Ructus autem proprie dicitur digestio cibi, et concoctarum escarum in ventum efflatio. Quomodo enim juxta qualitatem ciborum de stomacho ructus erumpit, et boni vel mali odoris flatus indicium est: ita interioris hominis cogitationes verba proferunt, et “ex abundantia cordis os loquitur.” Justus comedens replet animam suam, cumque sacris doctrinis fuerit satiatus, de boni cordis thesauro profert ea quae bona sunt, et cum Apostolo loquitur: “An experimentum quaeritis ejus, qui in me loquitur Christus?”]<sup>32</sup>

Words are gas; text is food. Petrus Comestor, whose very name means Peter the Eater, says that “Holy Scripture is God’s dining room, where the guests are made soberly drunk” [Sacram Scripturam habet pro coenaculo, in qua sic suos inebriat, ut sobrios reddat];<sup>33</sup> other writers talk about reading as eating bread, fishes, honey.

But there’s resistance. Even if, reading well, an orthodox medieval reader becomes Christ, she can never forget the difference between her and what she becomes. The text resists, too. Eating is not a neat appropriation. You have to work; it makes a mess. Here is Gregory the Great:

Holy Scripture is sometimes food for us, and sometimes drink. It is food in the obscure places, because it is, so to speak, broken when it is explained and absorbed when it is chewed. It is drink in its open places, because it can be absorbed just as it is found.

[Scriptura enim sacra aliquando nobis cibus est, aliquando potus. Cibus est in locis obscurioribus, quia quasi exponendo frangitur et mandendo glutitur. Potus uero est in locis apertioribus quia ita sorbetur sicut inuenitur.]<sup>34</sup>

The text resists; you have to tear it open to get your food—crack the bones and suck out the marrow, break the bread, open the comb and let the honey run. St. Bernard:

As food is sweet to the palate, so does a psalm delight the heart.  
But the soul that is sincere and wise will not fail to chew the  
psalm with the teeth as it were of the mind, because if he  
swallows it in a lump, without proper mastication, the palate will  
be cheated of the delicious flavor, sweeter even than the honey  
that drips from the comb.

[Cibus in ore, psalmus in corde sapit. Tantum illum terere  
non negligat fidelis et prudens anima quibusdam dentibus  
intelligentiae suae, ne si forte integrum glutiat, et non mansum,  
frustretur palatum sapore desiderabili, et dulciori super mel  
et favum.]<sup>35</sup>

The text resists; you take it into you, but it is not “you”; you break it open, suck it, chew it; you change it, and it will change you, so that, ultimately, you and it, subject and object, then and now, are not easily distinguishable.

If you’re a medieval reader, especially one living in the early and central Middle Ages, you learned to read by reading Scripture. You learned that to read is to grapple with the text as with a foreign body: Dagwood and the sandwich, or Jacob and the angel. Your goal is to know it as you would know a beloved body. St. Jerome, in a sermon on a tale of miraculous feeding (the loaves and the fishes), says: “We must know even the very flesh and veins of Scripture” [Debemus enim scire venas ipsas carnesque scripturarum].<sup>36</sup>

Medieval otherness, then, isn’t exactly what we nonmedievals might think it is. What one does with text in the Middle Ages, and what it does back are not at all what we’d expect. Even the period’s most paradigmatic formulation of alterity takes an unexpected turn, from the most foreign of foreign lands into the belly and its juices.

It is Augustine again, talking to his God.

You beat back the weakness of my vision; your light shone upon me in its brilliance, and I thrilled in love and dread alike. I realized that I was far away from you. It was as though I were in a land where all is different from your own and I heard your voice

calling from on high, saying, "I am the food of full-grown men. Grow and you shall feed on me. But you shall not change me into your own substance, as you do with the food of your body. Instead you shall be changed into me." (*Confessions* 7.10; 147, trans. modified)

[et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei, radians in me vehementer, et contremui amore et horrore. et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis, tamquam audirem vocem tuam de excelso: "cibus sum grandium: cresce et manducabis me. nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me."] (82)

Augustine is addressing his Other, probably the most Other being a late antique or medieval Christian believer could imagine. He speaks the foreign-country metaphor: he is far away in a land of unlikeness (*regio dissimilitudinis*, translated here as "a land where all is different from your own") where they do things differently from God, cut off by a divide that feels "like an impassable abyss."<sup>37</sup> Yet what the Other offers when it talks back is another metaphor, one as intimate as Augustine's was distanced: Eat me. Break me down, and be changed.

The material transmission of the medieval manuscripts we now read in all their mediated forms works in similarly vivid and somatic ways. The text doesn't just pass through the scribe, use his or her hand as an instrument; it's changed by its passage, like food through a body. Say the scribe has a vernacular text before her that was last copied fifty years before, a hundred leagues away: when she copies it, she might well copy it in her language, as it's spoken now, here. Traditional philology would read her changes as errors—mark them as Other, that is, as deviations from textual identity. But medieval practice gives us little ground for such an operation; here, difference and identity work themselves out in rather more complex ways. In one sense, we can say that the scribe ignores difference in the target text, assimilates difference-from-her to identity-with-her. But in so doing, she has also introduced difference into the family of the target text. Mutual difference within manuscript families is so thoroughgoing that it's best that we leave aside the notion of identity entirely—forget, as John Dagenais has urged us, the "work" and look at the material instantiation, what he calls the *scriptum*.<sup>38</sup>

The ruminative reading described by Illich, Carruthers, and Leclercq doesn't make meaning by abstracting ideas from the perception of a discrete



object, but rather by fragmentation, digestion, and reincorporation.<sup>39</sup> And in this, ruminative reading is sister to the production-centered epistemology called for by Johannes Fabian in 1983:

A production theory of knowledge and language . . . cannot be built on “abstraction” or “reflection” . . . or any other conception that postulates fundamental acts of cognition to consist of the detachment of some kind of image or token from perceived objects. Concepts are products of sensuous interaction; they themselves are of a sensuous nature inasmuch as their formation and use is inextricably bound up with language.<sup>40</sup>

The past is not a foreign country, really; perhaps the past is more like pie. And the more I read these readers, the better taste I find they have. I’m not sure that the practice I’m talking about is “medievalism” anymore; it simply feels like reading—medieval reading. To read like Peter the Eater is to love the text’s veins and flesh, and know it, familiarly, like a lover.<sup>41</sup> It is to be frightened by it, to resist it, to surrender even while both text and reader resist. Foucault: “If everything is dangerous, then we will always have something to do.”<sup>42</sup>

So here we are now, again, in this strange place where the medieval *now* and the twenty-first-century *now* cross and touch: the place of reading. Here we do indeed find “now” and “then,” identity and difference at play, but at play in ways so complex and interwoven that we might be tempted to throw out the binaries altogether and try to come up with some other way of thinking about it. At least, this is what will happen if we let the reading of medieval texts get under our skin.

Saint Bernard sure let *his* reading get under his skin. Or perhaps he got inside the skin of his reading. Perhaps both. When he reads with his monks, he can spend hours on five words of his target text, savoring those sweet words on his tongue, turning them over to see what’s underneath them, to find hidden caches of honey and light.

Tell us [Lord], I beg you, by whom, about whom, and to whom it is said: “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth” [Song 1:1]. How shall I explain so abrupt a beginning, this sudden irruption as from a speech in mid-course? . . . But if [the speaker] asks for or demands a kiss from somebody, why does she distinctly and expressly say *with the kiss of his mouth*, and even with *his own mouth*, as if lovers should kiss by means other than

the mouth, or by mouths other than their own? But yet she does not say: "Let him kiss me *with his mouth*"; what she says is still more intimate: "with the kiss of his mouth." How delightful a ploy of speech this, prompted into life by the kiss, with Scripture's own engaging countenance inspiring the reader and enticing him on, that he may find pleasure even in the laborious pursuit of what was hidden. . . . Surely this mode of beginning that is not a beginning, this novelty of diction in a book so old, cannot but increase the reader's attention. (*On the Song of Songs* 1.3.5; 3–4)

[Dic, quaeso, nobis, a quo, de quo, ad quemve dicitur: "Osculetur me osculo oris sui"? Aut quale est istud ita subitaneum et factum repente de medio sermonis exordium? . . . Deinde si se osculari a nescio quo vel petit vel praecipit, cur signanter et nominatim ore, et ore suo illius, quasi aliud quam os, aut alienum, et non potius suum, exhibere sibi soleant osculantes? Quamquam ne hoc quidem dicit: "Osculetur me ore suo," sed aliquid profecto insinuatius: "Osculetur," inquit, "oris sui." Et quidem iucundum eloquium, quod ab osculo principium sumit, et blanda ipsa quaedam Scripturae facies facile afficit et allicit ad legendum, ita ut quod in ea latet delectet etiam cum labore investigare. . . . Verum quem non valde attentum faciat istiusmodi principium sine principio, et novitas in veteri libro locutionis?] (5)

Bernard is eating his text, right in front of us; he's not ashamed—at least here with his beloved *Song*—of belches, gas, or arousal. He teaches us to read by sitting in the middle of the words and eating his way out.

One of my favorite medieval reading-teachers, Hugh of St.-Victor, makes much of a distinction between acting *de arte*, about an art, and *per artem*, through an art.<sup>43</sup> That is, writing about poetry as opposed to writing poetically. "Premodern" theoreticians like Augustine and Bernard have taught me to think *per artem*, theorize *per artem*, to work theory from the inside out rather than applying it like a coat of paint. Boethius praises exactly this about Philosophy's dialectical and rhetorical skill: she reasons and speaks *per artem*. "And these things you set out with proofs not fetched in from outside, but belonging within and native to our sphere, each one drawing validity from the other" [Atque haec nullis extrinsecus sumptis sed ex altero altero fidem trahente insitis domesticisque probationibus explicabas]. Philosophy

can do this because she knows that “words should be akin to the things spoken about” [cognatos de quibus loquuntur rebus oportere esse sermones].<sup>44</sup>

I want to learn to read and think and write from the people I read, to hear their rhythms moving in my thought and prose. Isidore of Seville was a philologist, too, and though his linguistics won’t pass “scientific” muster today, he sure knew what words tasted like, sure liked to break them open and let their juice run down his chin.

The gullet [*gurgulio*] takes its name from *guttur*, the throat, a passage to the mouth and nose, a path by which the voice is transmitted to the tongue, that words might be produced. Hence we say that someone who talks a lot is garrulous. The stomach [*rumen*] is next to the throat; it is where food and drink are consumed. Hence animals who recall and chew over their food are said to ruminate.

[Gurgulio a gutture nomen trahit, cuius meatus ad os et nares pertendit: habens viam qua vox ad linguam transmittitur, ut possit verba concludere. Vnde et garrire dicimus. Rumen proximum gurgulioni, quo cibus et potio devoratur. Hinc bestiae, quae cibum revocant ac remandunt, ruminare dicuntur.]<sup>45</sup>

I can learn more about the Middle Ages by playing with Isidore, by tasting *his* words in my turn, than I can by making myself modern by dropping footnotes, as one of his modern editors does, that point out how false and naive his etymologies are.<sup>46</sup> “If a person reads,” advises Arnulfus of Bohériss in the twelfth century, “let him search for savor, not science” [si ad legendum accedat, non tam quaerat scientiam, quam saporem].<sup>47</sup>

We look at each other, medieval and nonmedieval, human and text, each with demands and claims that change the other. What crackles in that looking is the dynamics of wonder. It is, Caroline Bynum has written in her wonderful article called “Wonder,” “a reaction of a particular ‘us’ to an ‘other’ that is ‘other’ only *relative* to the particular ‘us.’”<sup>48</sup> And then she quotes Jacques de Vitry’s *Historia orientalis*, written about 1200: “perhaps the Cyclopes, who all have one eye, marvel as much at those who have two eyes as we marvel at them.”<sup>49</sup> After holding the Cyclops’s gaze, we might, much later, try to write the experience up, to translate it from experience to story. If we remember that gaze, look at it and even *with* it in memory, our translation will be “not merely a matter of matching sentences in the abstract, *but of learning to live another form of life.*”<sup>50</sup>

If we let ourselves be taught to read by these marvelous medieval readers, if we read them not just *de arte* — for what they might constatively have to “tell us” about medieval culture, but also performatively, *per artem* — in the middle of them, from the inside out—something wonderful happens. Our writers and texts are medieval and coeval at once. Time turns around on itself. We have never been modern.<sup>51</sup>

### A living past with claims upon the present

Somewhere in Europe, around 1348, a little girl sits with her grandfather in the Jewish cemetery.

LITTLE GIRL. Grandfather, I keep having a dream. There's a silver bird in the sky. It leaves a trail of smoke. There's a woman standing on the ground. She's not wearing many clothes.

OLD MAN. What you see is very ancient, and from what you tell me, I think she must be a harlot.

LITTLE GIRL. And Grandfather, I also see a big carriage with no horses. People come running out of it.

OLD MAN. This too is very ancient. It is the ark, the ark of Noah. These people are trying to escape their destiny, and the will of God, but they will not succeed.<sup>52</sup>

In Meredith Monk's film *Book of Days*, time turns inside out. The visionary looks out from the viewer's past and sees, in her own time, our time, her future. The grandfather looks on from her present and sees antiquity as far back as Noah. Sometimes all times collapse together in a single present bent of past and future:

If the future and the past exist, I want to know where they are. I may not yet be capable of such knowledge, but at least I know that wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present. . . . [W]herever they are and whatever they are, it is only by being present that they *are*. (Augustine, *Confessions* 11.18; 267)

[si enim sunt futura et praeterita, volo scire ubi sunt. quod si nondum valeo, scio tamen, ubicumque sunt, non ibi ea futura esse aut praeterita, sed praesentia. . . . ubicumque ergo sunt, quaecumque sunt, non sunt nisi praesentia.] (156)

Time turns around on itself. This too is very ancient: Augustine says that what's good and true about Plato comes from Christ and not vice versa,<sup>53</sup> Augustine talks to Petrarch in the *Secretum*, any number of twelfth-century clerics write elegiacs flippantly musical enough to pass themselves off as Ovid. They do things differently here: to read the book of days is to pack a traveler's bag with sackbut and telephone. Sameness and difference, the critical and the poetic, that *now* then and this *now* now, all seriously, even dangerously, at play, in play.



*I am a camera.*

Medieval, coeval: "Two systems of understanding encounter each other to the very extent that both are conceptualized as forms of life; this encounter leaves open the possibility of fundamental change in both."<sup>54</sup> When we read *per artem*, with "poetic intelligence," the Middle Ages is less a foreign country than "a living past with claims upon the present."<sup>55</sup> And those claims call us to chew words well before we swallow, to remember that thought is material and sensuous before it can be abstract, to learn to live in the middle, between familiar categories of past and present, subject and object, "self" and "other." To read *de arte*, yes, for information, but also *per artem*, performatively, for love.<sup>56</sup>

[W]hat I really mean by poetic intelligence, by a poetic conception of things, is that nothing is completely dead. Everything lives. You simply have to find the rhythm.<sup>57</sup>

These are the words this reader hungers for. "I chew them over gently, and my internal organs are filled up, my insides fattened, and all my bones break out in praise" [Suaviter rumino ista: et replentur viscera mea, et interiora mea saginantur, et omnia ossa mea germinant laudem].<sup>58</sup> I didn't say that. St. Bernard did. One afternoon, perhaps, sometime around 1132, before a room full of white-robed monks. Just now.

in iuxta mortu  
illo mortuo  
dñi anime fug.  
uisse animā  
quia nolebam  
ne totus ille  
nescientē dili  
n moderate  
tabā. suspira  
filii. Portabā  
tē portari a  
n amenis



Gemitū seu gēmo  
ma scī avgsīni  
de obitu amici sui

*Saint Augustine, Confessions. England, 1150–1200. Newberry Library MS 12.7, fol. 22r detail. Courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago.*

## Notes

"In the Middle" is indebted to the many people who have read or heard it in various textual states. To Khristina Haddad, who spun the time and called me to Fabian; to the Fellow Flaming Bitches (Naomi André, Kali Israel, Stephanie Platz, Yopie Prins, Elizabeth Wingrove) and to Peggy McCracken for their sage and sisterly advice; to Santiago Colás, Alison Cornish, and Bill Paulson for their magic quotes and references; to audiences at Duke University and the University of California, Berkeley; to Helen Solterer, whose work on revivalism shaped this project at its middle stages.

- 1 L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953), 9.
- 2 Lee Patterson, "On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 93. See also Alexandre Leupin, "The Middle Ages, the Other," *Diacritics* 13 (1983): 22–31; and Carolyn Dinshaw, "Getting Medieval: Pulp Fiction, Gawain, Foucault," in *The Body and the Book*, ed. Dolores Frese and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997): 116–63.
- 3 "By affirming modernity yet presenting it as a return to true antiquity . . . the humanists created something they called the Middle Ages, which they saw as a sort of dark tunnel linking two brilliant epochs. . . . By contrasting 'modern times' with the Middle Ages they were advertising nothing less than a cultural revolution" (Jacques Le Goff, "For an Extended Middle Ages," trans. Arthur Goldhammer, in *The Medieval Imagination* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], 18). Le Goff attributes the coinage of the term *Middle Ages* to the papal librarian Giovanni Andrea del Bussi in 1469; it is, however, most often connected with Petrarch's attempt to separate his undertaking from his immediate past. For a moving reading of Petrarch's grip on later historical narrative and his own *medium aevum*, see Albert Ascoli, "Petrarch's Middle Age: Imagination, History, and the 'Ascent of Mount Ventoux'" *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991): 5–43. For bibliography on the term *Middle Ages*, see Patterson, "On the Margin," 92 n. 17.
- 4 Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Vintage, 1979), 282.
- 5 Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 3.
- 6 Paul Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 14.
- 7 Doris Banks, *Medieval Manuscript Bookmaking: A Bibliographic Guide* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 4. Siân Echard has recently studied the ways in which expertise, connoisseurship, and collectionism construct the medieval manuscript in postmedieval time: "The archival conditions which control the modern use of medieval manuscripts, then, create a particular context for the reading of medieval texts and books. These necessary precautions impose distance and even create awe: *the manuscript is foreign territory*, in other words. Access to that territory is limited to those who can prove their citizenship to it" ("House Arrest: Modern Archives,



- Medieval Manuscripts," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30 [2000]: 195, emphasis added).
- 8 Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 3.
  - 9 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 222, with my substitutions.
  - 10 "Christendom around 1500 is virtually mission country" [La Chrétienté vers 1500 c'est, presque, un pays de mission] (Jacques Le Goff, quoted in John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *American Historical Review* 91 [1986]: 522 n. 11). For more on Le Goff and *Annales* scholars as anthropologists, see Van Engen, 519–28. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
  - 11 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 18. Caroline Walker Bynum's work is exemplary in this regard; see, for example, her opening challenges (to herself and to her readers) in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 9: "If readers leave this book simply condemning the past as peculiar, I shall have failed. But I shall have failed just as profoundly if readers draw direct answers to modern problems from the lives I chronicle." Thinking through (post)colonial work has made me much more cautious than I used to be about revelling in what Bynum calls the "peculiar" or even "bizarre" aspects of the Middle Ages (*Holy Feast*, xv). Following Sara Suleri, we might call this danger "alteritism": "a postmodern substitute for the very Orientalism [it] seek[s] to dismantle" (*The Rhetoric of English India* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], 13). Compare the concerns voiced in Paul Freedman and Gabrielle Spiegel, "Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 677–704.
  - 12 Zumthor notes that one medievalist compared French literature in the second half of the twelfth century to "an abandoned city that the inhabitants had left open to all the insults of time, where, of all the crumbled monuments, only a few fragments of wall remain. . . . This view errs by excessive pessimism. But it does suggest that we should equip ourselves as archaeologists rather than as tourists" (*Speaking of the Middle Ages*, 27; his ellipsis). For why we might not want to be tourists, an exemplary moment from a science fiction novel: "'We're making our way up to the Jurassic. Been there?' 'Sure, I hear it's getting more like a fair ground every year.'" Brian Aldiss, quoted in David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22. Finally, and most poignantly, Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale* (New York: Vintage, 1994), an elegy for the in-between, and a lament for the losses inflicted by a History which pushes border-dwellers ancient and modern onto one side or the other of an imagined divide. Thanks to Sharon Kinoshita for this reference.
  - 13 Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages*, 66.
  - 14 *Ibid.*, 66.
  - 15 I imagined the annotator as male, though there is no absolute reason why it couldn't have been a woman. As I was reading, though, it didn't occur to me to gender this reader otherwise.
  - 16 Someone has corrected the annotator's slip by rubbing out "NEBRIDI" here (fol. 22r). Augustine's friend Nebridius doesn't appear until Book 6. It interested me to observe that the commentator's engagement with the *Confessions* is focused on the biographical



section of the book; he's remarkably silent from Book 11 on.

- 17 The *OED* gives as the first definition of *empathy*: "The power of projecting one's personality into (and so fully comprehending) the object of contemplation" and offers the following citation: "1912 *Academy* 17 Aug. 209/2 '[Lipps] propounded the theory that the appreciation of a work of art depended upon the capacity of the spectator to project his personality into the object of contemplation. One had to "feel oneself into it." . . . This mental process he called by the name of *Einfühlung*, or, as it has been translated, *Empathy*.'" Likeness or unlikeness between "subject" and "object" doesn't seem to be a concern in empathy; in sympathy, however, it's the very ground of the term: "A (real or supposed) affinity between certain things, by virtue of which they are similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence, affect or influence one another (esp. in some occult way), or attract or tend towards each other" (*OED* s.v. *sympathy*).
- 18 Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages*, 66.
- 19 Augustine, *Confessions* 11.15. English is from the translation of R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 266; Latin from the edition of James J. O'Donnell, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 1:155. For ease of location, I will cite medieval works by internal divisions as well as by volume and page numbers in the translations and editions used.
- 20 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 146, emphasis in original.
- 21 A similarly spatial way of figuring temporal difference, this time from the Middle Ages: John of Salisbury writes in his *Metalogicon* (1159) that "Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft by their gigantic stature" (*Metalogicon* 3.4; trans. Daniel D. McGarry [Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1971], 167). Bernard has gone even further than Hartley, for he imagines the relation between present and past as one of spatial *contiguity*, even continuity: the dwarf-and-giant is a unit, after all, its surfaces unbroken and continuous. In the Middle Ages, "[H]istory was only a more profound form of memory that added substance to the present and projected it into the future as a more intense form of being" (Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 16).
- 22 Many of the "here"s of this book's object-life remain, simultaneously, on its pages: it was originally tethered to its place with an ownership inscription: "Hic est liber sancte Marie de Radings quem qui celauerit uel fraudem de eo fecerit, anathema sit" [This book belongs to Saint Mary's of Reading. May whoever hides or steals it be anathema]. But what place? The place-name "Marie de Radings" has been written over an erasure, probably of the book's previous location; the inscription itself was cut from its original place and pasted onto a paper flyleaf in the eighteenth century (fol. 1v). The book is also marked in ownership by J. Reynoldes (fol. 1r), T. Fownes (flyleaf 1v), and by the Newberry Library. For more information on this manuscript, see Paul Saenger, *A Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscript Books at the Newberry Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 27–28. For the ways in which the material life and social use of the textual object open it to endless variation even from

- "itself," see Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 177–86.
- 23 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 146.
  - 24 Hartley, *Go-Between*, 9.
  - 25 In this readerly roll-call, Colston and Hartley are reenacting, probably completely by chance, a medieval scene of reading and doubled subject- and object-identification made by Marie de France and La Fresne in the *lai* of the same name. The soon-to-be-abandoned infant girl is wrapped in linen, then brocade; an inscribed ring is tied to her arm with a ribbon (Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. Jean Rychner, Classiques Français du Moyen Âge [Paris: Champion, 1981], lines 121–34). La Fresne herself is part of the text to be read; years later, now an adult, she reads them and herself at once.
  - 26 Hartley, *Go-Between*, 9.
  - 27 Quoted in Kathleen Biddick, "Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 392 n. 9. For the gendering, sexualization, and fetishization of the archive in the nineteenth century, see Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 116–29.
  - 28 Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 164.
  - 29 *Ibid.*, 164.
  - 30 Quoted in *ibid.*, 164.
  - 31 Beatus of Liébana, *Apologeticum ad Elipandum* 1.66, in *Obras completas de Beato de Liébana*, ed. and trans. Joaquín González Echegaray, Alberto del Campo, and Leslie G. Freeman (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos/Estudio Teológico de San Ildefonso, 1995), 774; my translation.
  - 32 Jerome, Letter 65 "To Principia"; *PL* 22:377.
  - 33 Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, *PL* 198:1053.
  - 34 Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 1.21.29; ed. Marc Adriaen, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 143 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 40.
  - 35 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* 7.4.5. English from *On the Song of Songs*, vol. 1, trans. Kilian Walsh (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 41–42; Latin from vol. 1 of Bernard's *Opera*, ed. Jean Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H. M. Rochas (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957), 34.
  - 36 Quoted in Germain Morin, "Les monuments de la prédication de St. Jérôme," in his *Études, textes, découvertes: contributions à la littérature et à l'histoire des douze premiers siècles (Vol. I)*, Anecdota Maredsolana, 2e série (Paris: Picard, 1913), 243 n. 1.
  - 37 Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 3.
  - 38 See John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the "Libro de Buen Amor"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 20.
  - 39 Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 160–69 and passim; Ivan Illich, *The Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's "Didascalicon"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 51–65; Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Learning in Monastic Culture*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 87–96.
  - 40 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 163.
  - 41 There *are* nonmedievales who still read like this; my hunch is that most of them are

writers given to fiction: “My understanding of the meaning of a book is that the book itself disappears from sight, that it is chewed alive, digested and incorporated into the system as flesh and blood which in turn creates new spirit and reshapes the world. It was a great communion feast which we shared in the reading of this book” (Henry Miller, *Tropic of Capricorn* [New York: Grove, 1961], 21). The book they got so excited about was Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*. Thanks to Bill Paulson for this reference.

- 42 Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 231–32.
- 43 Hugh of St-Victor, *Didascalicon* 3.5; ed. Henry Charles Buttmer (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1939), 56.
- 44 Boethius, *De consolazione Philosophiae* 3.prose 12; trans. S. J. Tester (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 304–5, 306–7.
- 45 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 11.1.58–59; ed. and trans. J. Oroz Reta and Manuel-A. Marcos Casquero, *Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1982), 1:22; my translation.
- 46 E.g., to Isidore’s tasty definition of woman [*mulier*] as deriving from *mollities*, softness, “as if to say *mollier*, softer” (*Etymologies* 2.18), Oroz Reta sniffs in a note that this etymology “is nothing more than a fantasy and does not authorize us to see in *mulier* an ancient comparative” (2:43 n. 56).
- 47 Arnulfus of Bohériss, *Speculum monachorum* 1 (PL 184:175B).
- 48 Caroline Walker Bynum, “Wonder,” *American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 14.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 50 Talal Asad, quoted in S. P. Mohanty, “Us and Them: On the Philosophical Bases of Political Criticism,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2 (1989): 11.
- 51 I have borrowed this ringing declaration from Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- 52 Meredith Monk, *Book of Days* (New York: House Foundation for the Arts, 1988). Images uncredited in the text are drawn from this work, *Book of Days*, a film by Meredith Monk © Meredith Monk 1988 and are used by permission.
- 53 “So as a result of studying the chronology [*consideratis temporibus*] it is much easier to believe that the pagans took everything that is good and true in their writings from our literature than that the Lord Jesus Christ took his from Plato—a quite crazy idea” (Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.28.108; ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green [Oxford: Clarendon, 1995], 107).
- 54 Mohanty, “Us and Them,” 16.
- 55 Patterson, “On the Margin,” 103.
- 56 As this piece went to press, I came upon Paul Stoller’s *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), which advances, from an anthropological point of view, an argument for embodied intellectual activity very sympathetic with the one I present here. He makes his argument from the Songhay peoples of Mali and Niger, whose epistemology, like that of the medieval Western readers I follow here, is profoundly embodied and sensuous, and learns from them lessons I learn here from these medievals: “Songhay sorcerers and griots learn about power and history by ‘eating’ it—ingesting odors and tastes, savoring textures and sounds” (3); “To accept

sensuousness in scholarship is to eject the conceit of control in which mind and body, self and other are considered separate. It is indeed a humbling experience to recognize, like wise Songhay sorcerers and griots, that we do not consume sorcery, history, or knowledge; rather, it is history, sorcery, and knowledge that consume us" (xvii).

- 57 Helen Solterer, "Performing Pasts: A Dialogue with Paul Zumthor," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997): 619.
- 58 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica* 16.2, ed. Leclercq et al., 1:90; my translation.