James, Furnivall, ed. *Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*. London: Oxford UP, 1872. Rept. 1928.
Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*. Ed. Derek Pearsall. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1979.
Metlitzky, Dorothee. *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1977.
Minnis, A. J. *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic and Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*. London: Scholar P, 1984.
Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993.
___. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
Schlauch, Margaret. *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*. New York: New York UP, 1927.

MEDIEVAL MULTICULTURALISM
THE SECOND OLDEST DEAD WHITE MEN

STEVEN EPSTEIN, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

‡

What can the expression "medieval multiculturalism" mean? A number of medieval authors, ranging from missionaries like William of Rubruck to merchants like Marco Polo to pilgrims like Ibn Battuta and Anselmo Adorno, wrote accounts of different cultures, sometimes including aspects of their own.[1] This rich, contemporary ethnographic literature reveals how medieval people viewed the multicultural world in which they lived. Each country in modern Europe also contains ethnic or religious minorities often receiving bad treatment, and in the Middle Ages things were worse. So we might look at French multiculturalism and consider the Bretons, now or then. But if we examine the medieval past where national boundaries were often vague or non-existent, multiculturalism evokes those cultures fated to be absorbed or persecuted by powerful majorities.

Most medievalists would concede that the history of how people in the United States have studied medieval history and literature foreshadowed in an eerie way the current, global approach to multiculturalism. A century ago medieval Europe meant the law, politics, and literature of the Anglo-Norman kingdom, and only adventurous American scholars studied France after the English left for good. Consider that monument to American medievalism, the essays presented to Charles Homer Haskins in 1929.[2] Two essays on Norway and Monte Cassino, and sixteen on Anglocentric topics. Back then the rest of Europe received little attention, and the histories of Jews, women, gays and lesbians, and other groups remained mostly outside the pale. The story over the last decades has been the opening up of medievalism to the entire continent and its people, or the invention of a multicultural Europe. The volume published in 1982 commemorating Haskins' twelfth century Renaissance still emphasized the old canon but had some place for a broader perspective.[3] A multicultural basis for medieval history probably came from French scholars. Historians owe a great debt to the Annales school and Marc Bloch for the noble vision of a total history incorporating the range of sources and peoples making the Middle Ages. This long-term revisionism proceeded by fits and starts and

remains incomplete, but some medievalists comprise the main group of European historians still trying to write about Europe, not just some bit of it. This broad approach to Europe, so natural to medievalists, is the best antidote to the cultural hegemony the northwest bit of the continent too often exerts on the American idea of Europe. Some of the best known contemporary scholars in the field, take as examples David Herlihy, Caroline Bynum, and John Boswell, have addressed issues about people of various conditions across Europe.[4] This work in part rests on local studies, but most medievalists, thanks to the universality of Latin, at one time or another try their hand at medieval Europe, and sometimes this effort carries them to Russia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

It sometimes seems that American scholars have adopted the English Middle Ages as in some sense their own, though of course the Mayans might be a more sensible choice. Outside the privileged circle of Anglocentrism, the peoples of Europe have for some time been writing about their own medieval history and literature. But this scholarship, usually in a bewildering range of languages, remains inaccessible to scholars and students limited to French or German. American graduate students who wander too far from the core, even to Spain or Italy in search of fresh sources, often place their careers in jeopardy as departments seek to fill medieval positions with the usual suspects. All these trends remind us that, despite appearances, England and France are not adequate stand-ins for Europe, and a multicultural approach to that continent reveals it to be a complex and diverse ethnic place. This observation is on one level a commonplace, but it has some consequences. Teaching the origins of European diversity helps students to fathom contemporary tragedies like "ethnic cleansing." This European diversity, perhaps responsible as Isaiah Berlin believed for the birth of the idea of toleration, and for recent hopes like the Maastricht Treaty, also contains the seeds for bitter ethnic and religious strife. The experience of minorities in Europe has not been happy; perhaps celebrating diversity would do Europe some good.

A more realistic history of minority cultures may be, as the American experience suggests, a good way to start. But medieval Europe from an American perspective also warns about the possibilities of organized violence against minorities blamed for heresy or the spread of disease. Europe's minorities opted for homelands, even in the extreme case of the Jews, who left Europe to find theirs. Much of Europe's medieval history concerns how cultural homelands were absorbed or obliterated by larger groups seeking more land and power. American students, whose conquered land contains remarkable mixes of peoples and traditions, may wonder about what lessons the multicultural life of Europe has for them. The medieval story is violence, persecution, and forced submersion of some identities—consider the Gypsies, Czechs, Irish, and Catalans for four cases among many. Medieval society repressed many cultures but destroyed few. Centuries later demands for justice and homelands continue to haunt European consciences, there and in the neo-Europes as well.

[1] For William of Rubruck see Christopher Dawson, *Mission to Asia* (Toronto, 1980), A.C. Moule and Paul Pelliot, *Le devisement du monde: Le livre des merveilles* by Marco Polo (Paris, 1984), H. A. R. Gibb, trans., *The Travels of Ibn Battuta A.D. 1325-1354* (Cambridge, 1958, 1962), Jacques Heers and Georgette de Groer, *Itinèraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre Sainte (1470-1471)* (Paris, 1978).

[2] Charles H. Taylor, ed. *Haskins Anniversary Essays in Mediaeval History* (Boston, 1929).
[3] Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).
[4] See David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985); *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987); John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1980).

DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION: AFRICA AND MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE HISTORY

MAGHAN KEITA, VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

‡

My excursions into history have been marked by an unwillingness to accept the notion that any group of people exist outside of the historical process. The inspiration for my work, aside from a deep need to know, sometimes borders on whimsy: trips to the toy store; the onslaught of "B" movies; and, a true love for oxymorons. The three can be strung together anecdotally. My oldest son and I are in a toy store. His request is for knights on horseback crafted by a well-known British toymaker. My reply is "Sure. As long as you find some 'African knights' as well." His look and response were similar to those people who viewed the Kevin Costner production of "Robin Hood"; and the same as many of our colleagues who pointed out the "oxymoronic" notion of contemplating work on intellectual life and urban culture in medieval and Renaissance Western Sudan (West Africa)—"they don't exist." "There are no such things as 'African knights,' Moors in twelfth century England, or an Africa which existed in the medieval and Renaissance period—let alone one marked by an intellectual life and an urban culture."

It's then that we all, more or less, turn to David Aers and his "Rewriting the Middle Ages." For me, Aers provides the perfect segue to revisionist histories which entertain not only gender and class, but "race" as well.[1] The question for many, however, is how?

The answer, in terms of a theoretical model, is rather straightforward. The theoretical model is premised on the simple questions of: "do these people and places exist; and what is the level of interaction within a given time and space?" Methodologically, I rely on a distortion of Foucault's paradigm of "deconstruction." I operate on the premise that historical analysis is just that—deconstruction. And here I rely on the generation of primary source material and my ability—in fact any historian's ability—to find new angles of interpretation for existing seminal material found in both primary and secondary sources. I hasten to add that those materials are not always literary. Consider the toys and movies that we began with and then we might assess the popular culture of a much earlier period like the Middle Ages or the Renaissance: sculpture, painting, the masque, weaponry, personal ornamental items, even coats of arms. This is obviously not an exhaustive list.

In this regard, one of the best sources for generating the questions which excite me is a "coffee table book" like the Menil Foundation's *Image of the Black in Western Art*. The title itself might prompt the question of "why are there blacks in Western Art"? A cursory reply might be "because they are key to the construction of what we know as