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Beyond Historical Accuracy: A Postmodern View of Movies and Medievalism¹

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If the cinema art is going to draw its subjects so generously from history, it owes it to its patrons and its own higher ideals to achieve greater accuracy. No picture of a historical nature ought to be offered to the public until a reputable historian has had a chance to criticize and revise it.

—Louis Gottschalk, Univ. of Chicago, 1935²

While the above excerpt from a letter written by Gottschalk to the president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer might seem rather severe and outmoded, it would not be surprising in the least to find many academics who still agree with the statement, at least in principle. Most Americans, however, and therefore most of the students in university classrooms, have learned the majority of what they know—or think they know—about the Middle Ages from Hollywood. It is quite likely that more college students have seen *First Knight* (1995) than have read Chrétien's or Malory's version of *Lancelot*, and it is probable that the William Wallace with whom they are best acquainted is Australian. However, the treatment of medieval or medieval-inspired films by academic medievalists is often apathetic in nature, or explicitly contemptuous. Some dismiss films as Hollywood fluff, while others, who may enjoy them on the surface, are highly critical of what the movies get wrong. Even many who appreciate medieval movies make a point of judging them by how much they get factually correct. This level of negative pressure creates a judgmental environment for those intrepid few who do openly teach medievalism and use movies as a means of Perspicuitas.

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accessing the Middle Ages, and more importantly, our own understanding of that period. This sort of hypercritical approach to medieval movies is inadequate, however, because of the basic premise upon which it is based—that medieval movies should be accurate portrayals of history and are judged accordingly.

In a special issue on film and history, Ron Briley, editor of *Magazine of History*, noted that “film is often disparaged in the schools for lacking intellectual rigor.”³ One need only listen in on conversations, view the lack of course offerings on the subject, or look to on-line discussion lists like Mediev-1 (excerpts of which have now been posted on the Internet Medieval Sourcebook) to get a feel for the prevailing manner in which some medievalists treat movies.⁴ A film like *The 13th Warrior* (1999) is criticized for its anachronistic arms, *Gladiator* (2000) for its inaccuracy regarding Roman history, and *Braveheart* (1998) for the liberties it takes with what little facts are known regarding William Wallace. One might find praise for particular elements of medieval films—for some of the arms and battle sequences in *The Messenger* (1999) for instance—but such approval is usually couched in a phrase like, “at least Hollywood got *that* right,” and the critic will immediately follow up with an assessment of the history of Joan of Arc. There are even harsh criticisms of the musical scores for medieval films because they are not medieval enough—one review was taken to the extreme of suggesting that medieval films should not have scores at all because the instruments in modern symphonies are not medieval. Comments on costuming, arms and armor, fight choreography, language, and more abound, usually in the negative. Plots are often criticized for being too free with the facts, and

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characters are disparaged for being too modern, or too one dimensional, clichéd or overly romantic. And the irony in all of this is that those films that present some historical truth, and attempt to depict a believable if not specific medieval past, are criticized more harshly than films like *A Knight's Tale*, which can be openly praised (if one were so inclined) because it does not even pretend to be accurate.

The problem lies with the assumption or demand that films be *historically* accurate, and consequently they are judged, good or bad, based upon that accuracy. That is why a film that does not pretend to be accurate enjoys the opportunity to be judged as a movie by itself, because it is not being held to a historical standard. However, such an approach is highly limiting and in the end is counterproductive to the teaching of good history and the quest for an understanding of the Middle Ages and how we receive that part of our past. Accuracy has little to do with the value of film as film, nor does a greater degree of accuracy necessarily make one medieval movie a better teaching tool than another, even in a medieval studies classroom.

The academic or Dragnet historian ("Just the facts, ma'am") looking at film has to face difficult questions: what criteria are applicable for judging visual history? How does film contribute to our sense of the past? The easiest answer (and the most irrelevant because it ignores the change in the medium) is to assess how true a work remains to "the facts." But you do not have to see many films to know such an approach is ridiculous.⁵

The first step in curing ourselves or our colleagues of this malady is to understand that history is not a pure science, and in doing so we must understand—some more grudgingly than others—that historians do not have a monopoly on doing or conveying history (as Gottschalk appears to have suggested in 1935). Furthermore,

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not all medieval movies have as their goal historical accuracy and thus should not be criticized when viewers find little. Literature, music, and art have as much claim to being a part of discovering the past as history. In fact, it is only in the modern, or perhaps even post-modern era that a distinction can be made between literature and history. So why is it that film is not allowed to play its own role in illustrating the past? For scholars, particularly in a post-modern setting, it should prove attractive and useful to think about a diverse approach to diverse types of texts (including film). The challenge lies in the fact that historical truth is elusive and at times is as subjective as literary meaning, yet in this post-Enlightenment age, it has achieved a rather godlike status. But history can only present a portion of the past, for it ignores the other means by which we may arrive at knowledge—a knowledge that should include a study of the way in which any audience receives and understands the past and how that understanding affects the present.

History need not be viewed as static or as necessarily linear. History is a process and a series of connections between different times and viewpoints. Paul Halsall has termed history a “conversation about the past,”⁶ and his definition is quite appropriate because a conversation has many elements and many participants, as well as opposing opinions. Literature can add cultural elements to our understanding not found in reading annals and chronicles. Art offers a visual representation of the past. Film, which, after a century of existence, has certainly claimed its place as a legitimate art form, offers not only visual and aural appreciation of the past, but motion in three dimensions. What no work in print over centuries of writing has been

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capable of achieving toward an appreciation of medieval warfare, films like *Braveheart* and Branagh's *Henry V* (1989) can accomplish in minutes. That is not to claim without reservation that the representations in these films are precisely accurate, only that film is able to convey information in a very powerful manner that can be more elucidating than the written or spoken word in some instances. Likewise, can one envision writing, sculpture or art offering a more effective way of presenting the chaos and perilous speed of a chariot race than was accomplished in *Ben Hur* (1959)? In these ways film does have the ability to make unique contributions to the conversation that fashions our understanding of the past. In fact, there are instances when film can achieve levels of appreciation greater than those possible in the written word. Robert Rosenstone points out that “[f]ilm *shows* history as a process. The world on the screen brings together things that, for analytical or structural purposes, written history often has to split apart.”⁷ Film, as a form of art that seeks to express meaning while at the same time offering dramatic entertainment, is in essence not well suited to historical accuracy (aside, perhaps, from the documentary). The creation of a complete narrative requires conjecture and fabrication. Yet film is a valuable tool in our efforts to arrive at a vision of the past that is vibrant, engaging and though speculative, real—at least in the sense that we can see and hear it.

So where exactly then does film fit into the conversation about the past and how can university curriculums benefit from the use of medieval movies? It is clear that a film should not have to be historically accurate to have value in the study of history, though there is certainly nothing wrong with a film that *is* historically accurate

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(insofar as scholars can agree on such a thing). In fact, a discussion of accuracies and inaccuracies regarding a film can be quite valuable. For all of the criticism heaped upon *Braveheart* by historical purists, it does present some realistic elements of medieval warfare and tactics, not to mention the spectacle of medieval executions. *Gladiator*, though centered on a romanticized plot that is fictitious, is rich with glimpses of a historical Rome. Several of the characters are portrayed quite well as are some of their actions, and while not everyone would agree with the architectural specifics of the cinematic reconstruction of Rome, the resulting grandeur is certainly effective at illustrating how the great city might have appeared compared to the rest of the late classical world. A number of the aspects of warfare and armaments in *The Messenger* were portrayed quite accurately and a few military historians, including Kelly DeVries,⁸ have commented on such. One of the films that I personally find most valuable for teaching medieval studies is *The 13th Warrior*, which contains a number of historical accuracies mixed into its otherwise fictional structure. Two scenes—the face washing of the Vikings and the ship burial—are taken precisely from the tenth-century *Risala* of Ibn Fadlan.⁹ Students are continually amazed that these two scenes, ones which are almost always picked out as likely Hollywoodisms, come directly from manuscript evidence. Historical accuracy, particularly when the movies are considered as a combination of many elements, can be found in many medieval movies and an appreciation of the accuracies can be very rewarding. A discussion of inaccuracies can also prove valuable and is equally important for obvious reasons.

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An assessment of medieval film that is limited to accuracy is woefully inadequate, however, and in order to understand the role of film in conveying history one must consider how film assembles a particular historical past and what that cinematic world suggests about not only our reception of history but also how we view our own time period in relation to that past. In most ways film is more akin to literature than to history, and medieval films, as participants in the conversation of the past, fit best perhaps into the categories of romance, myth and epic. Concerned less with specific historical details, medieval films attempt to capture other elements of the Middle Ages: impressions of a pagan past, Christianity, heroism, cultural developments like nationalism, and of course the political evolution of the Western World. An examination of these elements unavoidably transcends any one period in history and thus to confine a film to one historically accurate period limits its efficacy. Many of the supposed inaccuracies in medieval films are in fact successful efforts to render truths of another sort. Consider for example the anachronistic collection of armor present among the company of Vikings in *The 13th Warrior*. Buliwyf, the Beowulf analog in the film, is clad in a gilded breastplate of the type found in the late Middle Ages, not the Viking Era. While this is certainly not accurate it does reflect the importance of arms and armor in creating identity in medieval epic and romance. By presenting Buliwyf in such an advanced and visually impressive costume, the filmmakers have identified him with the heroic tradition. Like Achilles, Gawain and Red Cross Knight of literary fame, Buliwyf is readily identifiable as a member of the class of heroes who possess arms of great worth and exceptional appearance.

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Furthermore, a discussion of *The 13th Warrior* and its relationship with *Beowulf*, with Viking and Muslim contact in Western Asia, and the way in which the modern world perceives the Vikings is constructive and often leads students toward a greater appreciation of medieval literature and history. If viewed in connection with some modern images of Vikings, alongside Andrew Wawn's recent book, *The Vikings and the Victorians* for instance, a fascinating vision of the present creating the past will unfold.¹⁰ More than one student, after watching *The 13th Warrior* will turn toward, or even return to *Beowulf*, with genuine enthusiasm. This particular film can also be used as a tool to direct students toward primary source material that is often under appreciated, such as Arab sources, letting them know that Medieval Europe was not a homogeneous culture but was, in fact, a place and time when numerous disparate cultures were being defined.

Material and visual considerations, like Buliwyf's armor, are certainly not the only areas in which seeming inaccuracy can work to achieve an accurate portrayal of the medieval period. *Braveheart* may not be a completely accurate portrayal of the William Wallace of the late thirteenth century, but why should it be? The medieval source for the film is not historical but literary—the late fifteenth-century poem about Wallace by Blind Harry. In the poem we do find much of the nationalism, the heroism and even some of the romance present in *Braveheart*. While imperfect as a depiction of the time in which the historical Wallace lived, *Braveheart* is an excellent rendering of many of the ideas and sociology of the late Middle Ages. The fact that Blind Harry used Wallace to represent the ideologies of his own time does not make the film any

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less historical or for that matter less medieval. In turn modern filmmakers use the tale to comment upon the conflict between England and Celtic Britain in the twentieth century. This latter fact is made clear by the way in which modern Scottish audiences have seized upon the film as something of a national icon. The June 1996 cover of the Scottish edition of *Radio Times* names the Scottish soccer team “the bravehearts” and highlights an upcoming match against England, “the auld enemy.”¹¹ This flouting of certain historical specifics does not make the film less valuable as a tool for understanding the past but shows the manner in which history is a dynamic continuum.

*Of all the elements that make up a historical film, fiction, or invention, has to be the most problematic (for historians). To accept invention is, of course, to change significantly the way we think about history. It is to alter one of written history's basic elements: its documentary or empirical aspect. To take history on film seriously is to accept the notion that the empirical is but one way of thinking about the meaning of the past.*¹²

In truth all films are fictions, historically, even those learned documentaries that include careful reenactments that are “criticized” and “revised” by historians like Gottschalk. Any attempt to render the distant past in any form other than intellectual understanding (if even that is exempt) is to create a certain fiction. But this crafted fiction does not detract from the value of film as a means of comprehending and appreciating the past. For even popular medieval movies that contain numerous fictions derive, in the end, from some academic process, though it may come to the filmmakers third, fourth or even twentieth hand.¹³

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One of the values of film, like any art form, is that it allows the filmmaker to comment effectively upon one time period, perhaps his or her own, by presenting an alternate setting that might have particular resonance. By clothing modern issues in medieval garb a filmmaker may take advantage of certain tropes and ideals that are associated with the Middle Ages. It is important to ask what values are being associated with the Middle Ages and more importantly why have the Middle Ages been selected to demonstrate certain themes, be they medieval or modern. Heroism, gender relationships, loyalty, kinship and religion are all topics that can be discussed in association with medieval films. In this way even a movie like *First Knight* has merits, for while I find this to be a modern film in spirit it chooses an Arthurian setting. A discussion of the elements of Arthurian romance and their relationship to modern romance can prove quite fruitful. Films such as this reflect the period in which they were made as well as the manner in which modernity views the Middle Ages. In the case of *First Knight* the filmmakers have sampled from a wide scope of history—a romantic vision of the Arthurian Middle Ages is used as a backdrop for a modern romance that cheers individualism, celebrates passion over marriage, and even introduces a sort of democracy to Camelot. Reflecting on glaring inaccuracies and modernizations of the medieval period and considering why the filmmakers nevertheless chose a medieval setting can result in a level of engagement with the actual past that surpasses that achieved by simply looking at accurate history. This is not to defend *First Knight*, however. Kevin Harty, in *The Reel Middle Ages*, both acknowledges the aim of the film—and in so doing corroborates some of my own

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thoughts—and criticizes it for failing in that endeavor. He acknowledges that, “[g]iven that there is no one version of the tale of Arthur. . . filmmakers can be granted some license in their interpretation of that legend,” but goes on to suggest that the film “fails to capture the spirit of the original legend or to make a case for its contemporary translation of an oft-told story.”¹⁴ By looking at a film in this manner, whether one is criticizing or lauding the accomplishments of the production, scholars and students will find more meaningful access to one of the many post-modern “texts” available regarding medieval studies and medievalism.

Another film of this nature is *A Knight's Tale* (2001), which unabashedly weaves modernity into a medieval setting that includes jousting, courtly love and even Geoffrey Chaucer. This examination of the past, of the codes of chivalry, violence and warfare that seem to have dominated much of the Middle Ages and to have been central to male-female relationships within medieval literature, is imaginative and quite unorthodox. From a post-modern perspective, this film challenges the ideas of a medieval past as being so very different from the present. Spectators singing a rock and roll song by *Queen* at a medieval joust certainly raise the eyebrow of many, but the song certainly strikes a more familiar chord with a modern audience than the strumming of a lute. Does the modern song convey the enthusiasm and pageantry of such events to a modern audience more successfully than an authentic tune would have done? A Geoffrey Chaucer—thin, energetic and young—who cavorts before the nobles and composes caustic and humorous rhyme, while not the Geoffrey found in the Ellesmere manuscript, certainly conveys the poet's style (or at least a particular

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view of that style) in a modern sense.¹⁵ This sort of provocative break with the expected historicity of the Middle Ages should appeal to post-modern scholars, as it is very much a remaking of a historical text that demands a reassessment of what we consider truth about any given subject. Post-modern thinkers should offer praise to a medieval movie that dares to shock viewers and juxtapose references to the past and to the present.¹⁶

This retelling of the present by using the past is worth a closer look by any medievalist and not only for the reasons already identified. For example, in addition to a reworking of Blind Harry, *Braveheart* becomes an outstanding example of medieval-style creation, because it in effect mirrors the way in which medieval authors themselves conversed about their own past and present. Blind Harry was not alone among medieval writers in reaching back into history to comment upon current events. This description in fact fits much of medieval artistic creation. Do we dismiss Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, because while it is supposedly set in ancient Greece, Palamon and Arcite are clearly medieval knights? Do we scoff at the presence of medieval weaponry and tournaments in Theseus's arena? Why do we not criticize *The Song of Roland*? It is certainly not accurate in its history, its arms, its portrayal of Islam or just about anything. It was not too long ago that J.R.R. Tolkien addressed an audience of scholars and students and revolutionized the way academia treats *Beowulf*. Many early twentieth-century scholars bemoaned the fact that the poem was not an accurate portrayal of the Germanic pagan past, that the real story had been lost, a tower built instead of an old hall reconstructed. Yet in the words of Tolkien, "from the

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top of that tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea.”¹⁷ Snorri Sturluson and nearly all of the authors of the Icelandic family sagas did much the same when they recorded their mythologies and historical fictions. The family sagas, most of which are thirteenth-century accounts of tenth- and eleventh-century events are perhaps the perfect example of historical accuracy blended with fictional narrative. We do not condemn these storytellers because it is an accepted part of the tradition of medieval writing that authors use the past to comment upon the present, and in so doing they reveal truths about both. Yet in this age of supposed objectivity and a veneration of “facts,” we are reluctant to give our modern day skalds the same artistic license.

That is not to say that filmmakers should be given free rein to do whatever they will, unchecked and unquestioned by academics, by students, or by all viewers. The very power of film narrative carries with it a certain responsibility—or should. Like all forms of art, film has the power to shape and influence the minds of its audience. Because of this there is a certain danger inherent in film, as there is in literature, journalism and history. One of the justified fears that modern medievalists may have is that the constant rewriting of the past, to make it more convenient to the present, is a powerful instrument of political control. Recall that Hitler and Stalin had very good filmmakers working for them, and they were good at historical movies as well. While the vast majority of modern film is a far cry from the propaganda films of these dictators, there *are* certain agendas promoted in modern movies, and historical narratives are often chosen as vehicles for political statement. Consider what has been

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mentioned already regarding the nationalistic views expressed in *Braveheart*. The reciprocal to the celebration of Scottish pride and independence is the villainization and emasculation of the English, a political message that is at least as relevant to modern Britain as it was to late-medieval Britain. While the celebration of freedom from tyranny and individual heroism might be viewed as positive, the film also reinforces the social prejudice that exists between Celtic Britain and England. The presence or absence of historical accuracy can be used to reinforce or challenge certain prejudices, ideologies and agendas. These sorts of underlying issues make the study of medieval film all the more necessary, and make the discussion of them all the more rich.

Let us step back and consider for a moment the theoretical film for which many medievalists seem to be clamoring. Let us use the history of William Wallace and rewrite *Braveheart* as a historically accurate film. Of course, the first thing to go must be the title. It is overtly romantic and simply a little schmaltzy. Next go the kilts, which of course would not have been worn by thirteenth-century Scottish lowlanders, of which Wallace was one. What about the romance with the Princess of Wales? Not likely, as she was twelve at the time. The real Wallace's penchant for employing conscription, and hanging those who refused, along with the possibility that he made overtures of peace to Edward I after Falkirk, would have made the cry of "Freedom!" at his execution a little less heroic.¹⁸ So is it truly historical accuracy that we want? Or is it rather that we are so fascinated by the Middle Ages that we long to have medieval movies live up to our visions of the time—to somehow give value to the knowledge

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that we spend our lives exploring, appreciating and disseminating among all who will bend an ear to our lectures or cast their eyes over our writings? For these very reasons we should embrace medieval movies, especially as teachers. The numerous ways in which film can depict aspects of the Middle Ages allow us the opportunity not only to experience a vision of the period that we study, but also to open a dialogue between our students and ourselves. We should welcome the contributions that films make to the mythographic work of understanding the past and applying it to the course of human history, including the present. Understanding history as a three dimensional cultural development, whereby the past is always viewed in relation to the present viewing it is a more productive way to teach than presenting history as a linear progression of fact. This model allows history to become dynamic in the present and thus permits our students to become active participants. Pierre Sorlin has written that, “history is a society’s memory of its past, and the functioning of this memory depends on the situation in which the society finds itself.”¹⁹ In this way the medieval world on film not only mirrors the modern world by standing in opposition to it, but also serves as a revealing point of apposition. Thus a filmmaker can use the recognizable elements and ideals of both worlds to express ideas about human history as a whole.

This last point seems to be readily accepted by even the grumpiest medievalist when it comes to films that do not even pretend to be accurate depictions of a medieval past. Films like *Excalibur* are seldom criticized for being inaccurate because they unashamedly foreground their status as myth and heroic romance.²⁰ But they draw as much upon the medieval past as films that *are* criticized, the only difference

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being that they draw not upon the history but the other elements used in understanding the past: literature, art and myth. *Excalibur*, *The Fisher King*, even a film like *The Lord of the Rings*, which is only influenced by a medieval background, are films that use the Middle Ages to strike chords with viewers. Richard Osberg's article on *The Fisher King* illustrates the manner in which a film that is uniquely modern can at the same time tap "a communal medievalism" that exists in western culture.²¹ Osberg's discussion of the ways in which director Terry Gilliam infuses medieval themes and imagery not only into the narrative framework but into subtle film techniques is an excellent example of the way in which film can make a unique contribution to medieval studies.²² Films such as *The Fisher King* dip into the cauldron of myth—to borrow a phrase from Tolkien—and come out with a ladle-full of medievalisms (though not *necessarily* medieval truths) precisely because the Middle Ages has the ability to convey certain ideas better than any other period in our past. While many of these ideas may be romanticized, they are not necessarily fictional.

The Middle Ages succeeds in being many things for a modern audience: a mythic world where archetypal individuals or even archetypal cultures can take believable form, a realm where spirituality and even magic can be accepted without question, a time of uncomplicated heroism, of visceral violence, of injustice, of moral rigor and of depraved fanaticism. The Middle Ages can be all of these *in addition to* a period of history to be explored on a critical and scholarly level. But to ignore the former out of a sense of respect for the latter is to ignore an avenue down which we can lead our students toward a genuine appreciation of a very real period of our own

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history. If a portal to knowledge is open we should not hesitate to take as many people through as we can. In so doing, we can help them to discern what is and is not accurate, what is being suggested and what insights can be gained from modern views of the Middle Ages. Precisely *because* medieval films are not historically accurate, but are shaped by numerous influences from our understanding of the spectrum of the past as well as our own present, we should learn to study and critique film. This, of course, means that we must learn to investigate and appreciate the nuances of a new “text.” We must set aside the exclusive privilege of the written word and allow the drama of film to challenge us and our students to view history as a dynamic medium that can be appreciated for its complexity and its applicability to the present. Historical film, as a production of the present concerning the past, is one way in which we can participate in history. From this cinematic tower we might view the sea.

Ron Briley makes perhaps the most important case for learning to appreciate and teach historical film when he writes, “Whether educators approve or not, young people are going to attain a great deal of historical information through film. Accordingly, it behooves teachers to provide their students with the intellectual tools and media literacy to deconstruct and interpret film.”²³ Without doubt historical films pose an interesting challenge to teachers of medieval studies, but the one thing we cannot do is ignore them or dismiss them, because our students do not.

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¹ A much shorter, conference version of this article was published as, “Medieval Movie Madness,” in *The Year’s Work in Medievalism* 17, 2002 (2003): 107–114.

² Quoted in Robert A. Rosenstone, “The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age,” in Marcia Landy, ed., *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 50.

³ Ron Briley, “Teaching Film and History,” *Magazine of History* 16, no. 4 (2002): 3. While this journal is directed primarily toward secondary education, Briley does attend to film and history at the university level and his article—along with several of the articles in this issue—addresses educators at both levels.

⁴ Paul Halsall, “Medieval History in the Movies,” *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University, (1996, rev. 2002), <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/medfilms.html#vikings>>

⁵ Robert Rosenstone, *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 7.

⁶ Paul Halsall, “Myth, Epic and Romance: Medieval History in Film,” University of Northern Florida (2002), <<http://www.unf.edu/classes/medieval/film>>

⁷ Rosenstone, “Looking at the Past,” 57. Emphasis mine.

⁸ Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999).

⁹ For full text and commentary see H.M. Smyser, “Ibn Fadlan's Account of the Rus with Some Commentary and Some Allusions to *Beowulf*,” *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.*, Jess B. Bessinger Jr. and Robert P. Creed, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1965) 92-119.

¹⁰ Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000).

¹¹ Colin McArthur, “*Braveheart* and the Scottish Aesthetic Dementia,” in Tony Barta ed., *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 182–3.

¹² Rosenstone, “Looking at the Pat,” 65.

¹³ T. A. Shippey, Personal Interview, 1 Sept. 2002.

¹⁴ Kevin J. Harty, *The Reel Middle Ages: American, Western and Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Asian Films about Medieval Europe* (London: MacFarland, 1999), 97.

¹⁵ A fascinating and insightful comparison between the Chaucer in *A Knight’s Tale* and the “real” Chaucer can be found in Nickolas A. Haydock, “Arthurian Melodrama, Chaucerian Spectacle, and the Waywardness of Cinematic Pastiche in *First Knight* and *A Knight’s Tale*,” *Studies in Medievalism* 12 (2002): 5–38.

¹⁶ Robert B. Toplin, “The Historian Encounters Film: A Historiography,” *Magazine of History* 16, no. 4 (2002): 10.

¹⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984).

¹⁸ McArthur, 168.

¹⁹ Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 16.

²⁰ Arthur Lindley, “The Ahistoricism of Medieval Film,” Latrobe University, Australia (1998), <www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fir598/ALfr3a.htm>

²¹ Richard H. Osberg, “Pages Torn From the Book: Narrative Disintegration in Gilliam’s *The Fisher King*,” *Studies in Medievalism* 7 (1996): 194–224.

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²² Another commendable discussion of what film technique can offer, and how it affects what can be presented in the way of medievalism is William F. Woods, "Seeking the Human Image in *The Advocate*," *Studies in Medievalism* 12 (2002): 55–78.

²³ Briley, 3.

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