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The Social Value of Cross-Cultural Medieval Studies

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The Social Value of Cross-Cultural Medieval Studies

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Abstract

Medieval studies offers insights into the human condition that are distinct to the period yet crucial to comprehending our twenty-first-century moment. As the dissemination of medieval studies and modern ‘medievalisms’ widens, we gain new insight into the extent to which ideas about literature and the arts, science and the environment, racial and cultural difference, and cross-cultural interaction are grounded in the thinking of past centuries. This article highlights four new books that expand the traditional setting of medieval European studies: Geraldine Heng’s *Teaching the Global Middle Ages*, a handbook for teachers; Peter Haidu’s *The Philomena of Chrétien the Jew*, a radically new assessment of a canonical author; Andrew D. Turner’s *Códice Maya de México*, a pictorial, forensic, and literary presentation of the oldest surviving book of the Americas; and Larisa Grollemond and Bryan C. Keene’s *The Fantasy of the Middle Ages*, a lavishly illustrated survey of medievalism.

The two times, past and future, how can they *be*, since the past is no more and the future is not yet? On the other hand, if the present were always present and never flowed away into the past, it would not be time at all, but eternity.

— Augustine, *Confessions*

We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours.

— John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*

The James Webb Space Telescope will be a giant leap forward in our quest to understand the Universe and our origins ... a powerful time machine with infrared vision that will peer back over 13.5 billion years to see the first stars and galaxies forming out of the darkness of the early universe.

— U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

On December 25, 2021, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in collaboration with the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency, launched into orbit around the sun the James Webb Space Telescope (Webb).¹ The telescope arrived on January 24, 2002, at the Sun-Earth L₂ Lagrange point, where it has been positioned in a relatively stable halo orbit.² U.S. design, production, and operational costs for the telescope are estimated at around \$9.7 billion, supplemented by European and Canadian contributions of over \$1 billion (NASA, “James Webb”). The less ambitious Hubble Space Telescope has cost over \$16 billion (1977–2021, adjusted for inflation), and, given the nature of complex projects, Webb may eventually cost as much (NASA, “Hubble”).

Why have our governments expended so much money and effort? As explained by NASA, Webb “will study every phase in the history of our Universe, ranging from the first luminous glows after the Big Bang, to the formation of solar systems capable of supporting life on planets like Earth, to the evolution of our own Solar System.” It “will help astronomers to compare the faintest, earliest galaxies

¹ The authors are grateful to Moira Fitzgibbons for her thoughtful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

² ‘Lagrange points’ are places where the gravitational forces of two large bodies and centrifugal force balance each other, creating in this case a stable position between the Earth and Sun ideal for satellites.

to today's grand spirals and ellipticals, helping us to understand how galaxies assemble over billions of years" (NASA, "James Webb"). The value we have placed upon Webb, such that progressive and conservative administrations alike have allocated enormous intellectual and financial resources to its development, signals that we as a culture seek to know our history—how we came to be the planet and people that we are. It reflects the hope that, with this knowledge, we may gain insight into, and some small measure of control over, our possible futures.

Which, to turn from things cosmic to local, suggests why medieval studies is vital. If we wish to understand twenty-first-century thoughts, values, social structures, and behaviors, and to point them in directions we desire, the later Middle Ages, from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, are a critical point of origin. In western Europe, these were the centuries when modern languages and literatures developed, when modern notions of artistic perspective became prominent, when modern social and economic structures and practices were established, when universities and their academic disciplines were founded, and when modern science and medicine began to be codified. These were also the centuries when modern international warfare and the modern national state came into their own.

It was once commonplace to locate western European foundations in an early modern Renaissance that linked knowledge to newly rediscovered Greco-Roman textual culture. Scholars now accept that the medieval centuries were the crucible in which the framework for the modern transatlantic world was forged.³ The nineteenth-century coinage 'Middle Ages' diminishes the continuum that is European, or indeed world, history.⁴ That there was no perception of a 'Middle Ages' among those who lived in the years between 1100 and 1500 is all the more reason why students should discover what actually can be known about this era that birthed modernity.

Public and private life in the European Middle Ages was, of course, radically different from ours. Diversity is a function not just of space but also of time, and life has evolved in profound ways over the hundreds of years that separate us from Chrétien de Troyes's imagined industrial shop in *Yvain*, Dante's eternal architecture in the *Divine Comedy*, or Chaucer's pilgrimage community in *The Canterbury Tales*. Many aspects of daily life and social structure—the number and kinds of rooms in an urban dwelling; modalities of commerce and exchange; energy sourcing and usage; practices of pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing; responses to injury and disease—were dictated by environmental constraints that centuries of cultural evolution have obscured. Material conditions have determinative effects on what people are able to think and how they think. In learning about the lived differences between the pre-industrial past and the post-industrial present, students gain insight into how relative and contingent many of the beliefs and values we take for granted are.⁵

Spatial and temporal interrelatedness is now widely recognized among medievalists. Current explorations in medieval studies have taken us beyond the European to the global. The scope of historical inquiry has expanded from elite politics to inclusive social and economic structures. Ecologies of climate, agricultural innovation and expansion, deforestation, population, and disease

³ For an early example of such literary scholarship, see Hanning 1977.

⁴ Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers initiated various Latin terms to distinguish their era of 'rebirth' from more recent 'dark' ages: *media tempestas* (middle time) is first recorded in 1469, *media aetas* in 1522, *medium aevum* in 1570. The English terms *medieval* and *medievalism* are first recorded in 1817 and 1844, respectively (Matthews 2011).

⁵ We think of Pierre Bourdieu's ideas about *doxa*, "the class of that which is taken for granted," a culture's underlying principles which, under ordinary circumstances, are "beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord of social convention" (1977, 169).

have broadened our historical understandings. Intellectual history, once focused upon appreciating the writings of male, often misogynist clerics, now compartmentalizes such writing and interrogates alternate representations of gender, race, and emotions. The myth of a monolithic culture governed by Christian, Caucasian, and heterosexual male values has been deconstructed and, quite steadily, is being supplanted by a more capacious vision. Computer- and satellite-assisted archaeology allows us to see beneath the surfaces razed by colonial conquest, while Asia, Africa, and the Americas are becoming increasingly integral parts of medieval studies.

As editors of a journal centered on a single author, *The Chaucer Review*, our interests might seem isolated from the transformations that mark modern scholarship, and, indeed, some might suggest that the journal should restrict itself to studies that bear close and positive relation to the subject and subjectivity explicit in its name. We do not share this perspective, but we appreciate from whence it comes. As Helen Cooper writes in the opening sentences of *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales*, “Chaucer was the best story-teller in an age renowned for its skill in narrative. In the *Canterbury Tales* he wrote some of the finest stories ever produced, in poetry of a quality unmatched in that golden age of the late fourteenth century” (1984, 2). If there is profit beyond personal pleasure in immersing oneself in the artistic richness of transcendent poetry, in bringing one’s own intelligence into conversation with a towering intellect, and in sharing one’s responses with others, then reading Chaucer—or Dante, or Chrétien, or Wolfram von Eschenbach—is in and of itself of social and personal value. Such study ought to be treasured.

But *The Chaucer Review*’s subtitle is *A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism*, and so we reject the premise that consummate artists—Chaucer and the *Pearl* poet, Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France, Dante and Giotto—need to be studied in isolation from their broadly conceived sociocultural milieus. On the contrary, we see medieval studies—Chaucer Studies in particular—as tied not only to the immediate sphere of one Englishman’s lived and literary life, but also to the British, European, and global environments of the later Middle Ages. Books like David Wallace’s *Premodern Places: Calais to Suriname, Chaucer to Aphra Behn* (2004) and Marion Turner’s *Chaucer: A European Life* (2019) offer informed correctives to insular views of Chaucer and his circle, and it is increasingly clear that medieval studies benefits from looking further afield, in both space and time, from late medieval western Europe.⁶ This is not to disavow the accomplishments of traditional medieval scholarship, but to appreciate how we are able to see further than could the giants on whose shoulders we stand. As the products of a globalized world, twenty-first-century students properly demand that we acknowledge the international foundations of the modern world. The urgency they feel reflects the work their teachers are performing in fashioning a broadened medieval studies that comprehends the role of western European culture while also incorporating that culture into a more expansive spatial and temporal frame.⁷

To illustrate this imperative, we highlight four new books that expand the traditional setting of medieval European studies. The first is a handbook for teachers, *Teaching the Global Middle Ages* (2022).

⁶ See Wallace 2016 for a trans-European perspective.

⁷ Students’ input is crucial, as conscious and radically diverse engagement is essential if we are to recognize a global past that transcends Eurocentrism. As Jonathan Hsy puts it, “public understandings of the past can change if a global medievalist community situates the scholarly expertise and lived experiences of people of color at the center of our ongoing discussions about what the Middle Ages can mean today” (2021, 6).

The second, *The Philomena of Chrétien the Jew* (2020), is a radically new assessment of a canonical author. The final two are exhibition catalogues from the Getty Museum: a pictorial, forensic, and literary presentation of the astronomical book *Códice Maya de México* (2022); and a lavishly illustrated survey of medievalism titled *The Fantasy of the Middle Ages* (2022), a book that might well grace a coffee table. We choose the teachers' handbook as an authoritative introduction to an essential and rapidly evolving field of study; *The Philomena* for its daring recontextualization of a seminal authorial voice; and the Getty catalogues because they speak to the interests of nonspecialist audiences, that is, to members of the public curious enough about medieval matters to attend a museum exhibit and then wish to learn more. That these books mention Chaucer little or not at all does not lessen their relevance to the community in which that self-aware cosmopolitan author lived and wrote.

Teaching and Studying the Global Middle Ages

Americans and Europeans now dwell in multicultural societies where cross-border movement and communication are commonplace. Even so, it may remain hard for individual scholars trained in national and regional studies to put aside longstanding disciplinary assumptions and incorporate global studies in their research and classrooms. We welcome the new book *Teaching the Global Middle Ages* as a step toward juxtaposing medieval cultures about which many of us may know very little.⁸

Geraldine Heng's introduction and opening chapter offer a comprehensive analysis of how globally informed European views on race were during the Middle Ages. Immersion in the book's entire 450 pages causes one to understand how Eurocentric study omits much about the medieval centuries. For example, products and ideas transported by the Silk Roads were prized in medieval European societies; Jewish communities and individual Jews were everywhere in Europe; and European contact with Arabs, east and south Asians, and sub-Saharan Africans was not restricted to borderlands linked by conflict and trade. Moreover, North American students benefit immensely when they are taught to comprehend the medieval lives of the indigenous peoples, the Asians, and the Africans who are also their ancestors. In Heng's words, "a global perspective of the deep past can transform our understanding of history and of time itself, enabling us to identify, for instance, not just a single scientific and industrial revolution that occurred once, exclusively in the West, but the recurrence of multiple scientific and industrial revolutions in the non-Western, nonmodern world" (2022, 5).⁹

We learn about human possibilities through both similarity and divergence. As Augustine recognized, present thought is inextricably entwined with knowledge of the past and perceptions of the future, and neither past, present, nor future is heterogeneous. Our thinking is enriched by access to the global past, and correspondingly deprived when such access is derided or denied. Global

⁸ The volume's focus is on Asian literatures and cultures, with limited treatment of Africa and marginal reference to the Americas. This emphasis reflects the chronology of extant texts, an approach also seen in the organization of Lande and Feeney 2021, in which an opening section treating the languages of "East and South Asia" is followed by sections on "The Mediterranean," "European Vernaculars," and "Modern Geographies" (the last divided among "Latin American," "African," "African American," and "World").

⁹ Heng cites the examples of "the industrial mass production of commercial ceramics in China for the international export market during the Tang dynasty in the ninth century and the massive iron and steel industries of eleventh-century Song China—using coal that amounted to seventy percent of the tonnage of coal burnt in the iron and steel industries of early-eighteenth-century industrial Britain" (2022, 5).

medieval studies allows us to articulate the importance of medieval peoples and cultures that may never or rarely have come into contact with Europeans. A readjustment of older myopic practices in favor of enthusiastic global study may or may not detract from European cultural accomplishments—this is ultimately for future generations to decide—but such a readjustment allows those accomplishments to be contextualized honestly.

“Crestiens li gois”

Speculating upon the self-identification of Chrétien de Troyes, the author of the earliest extant works of Arthurian romance, as “Crestiens li gois,” Peter Haidu asks us to consider the likelihood that a foundational voice of modern Western literature was a converted Jew.¹⁰ As Haidu writes,

A strand of European literature, from Geoffrey Chaucer to Walter Benjamin and beyond, fuses subjectivity with the aesthetic coherence of fragmented holism, a witty self-reflexivity that betokens a critical attitude toward the social totality, and a sense of ultimate redemption, even in the face of impending disaster—a sense, a hope that sometimes glimmers as little more than grasping at straws. That strand of modernity was wound, and unwound in the work of Chrétien de Troyes, during the second half of the twelfth century, when modern European literature was knit by a Jew, a holocaust survivor of the pogrom of 1096. (2020, 19)

The identification of Chrétien as a Jewish survivor aligns him with at least two other celebrated twelfth-century poets, each of whom journeyed north from Islamic Spain: Petrus Alfonsi (born Moshe Sefaradi), a theologian and scientist whose works include western Europe’s earliest known story collection, the *Disciplina Clericalis*, and who taught in France, England, and Germany; and Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra, an acclaimed poet, theologian, scientist, and scholar who taught in cities across Italy and France before crossing over to London in 1158.¹¹

Jews clustered in communities across the continent, individual Jews traveled widely, and, driven by periodic expulsions and constant proselytizing, converted Jews were everywhere influencing those around them (even as they might be subject to mob violence and state-sponsored massacre). Moreover, Jews were not unique in being a non-Christian population that was both ubiquitous and denounced. As with antisemitism, medieval racist disparagement of Asian and African cultures and religions played a critical role in the buttressing of Eurocentric confidence in the moral and intellectual superiority of Christian societies whose technological and martial success permitted their global

¹⁰ On his translation of “gois” as “goy,” from the Hebrew for “non-Jew,” see Haidu 2020, 29–43. The reference occurs at line 734 in the French edition of Chrétien’s first narrative poem, *Philomena*, the exact midpoint of the 1468-line text. It is at line 736 in Terry’s translation.

¹¹ The unusual name *Chrétien* is paralleled by Sefaradi’s adoption of the name *Petrus* in recognition of his conversion to Christianity in June 1106, on the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul. Tolan (1993, 9–11) provides a useful summary of what little is known about Alfonsi; see also Raybin 2019. For a brief introduction to the contributions of “astrologer, scriptural exegete, poet, and polymath” ibn Ezra, see Wallace 2023. Wallace writes of ibn Ezra’s 1159 *Iggeret Shabbat*, “[a]s a male dream poet speaking as a commanding female first-person [voice], dictating text and terms to a man who is also himself, ibn Ezra scoops Chaucer, a later London poet, by several centuries” (2023, 413).

expansion.¹² Study of medieval Islamic, Asian, African, and Oceanic literatures and cultures brings to recognition their influences not just on the European Middle Ages but also on modern thought.¹³

Students can now be more broadly mindful of the impactful contributions of the many ancestors from whom we are descended. The medieval centuries were never homogeneous, neither across nor within cultural boundaries. Institutional Christianity was indeed central to the European Middle Ages, but the intellectual and domestic development of its culture depended on—often was fertilized by—the creativity (and, also, resistance) of people with myriad values, bloodlines, and beliefs. That medieval studies enables recognition of the multicultural roots of modern thought is part of what makes it so essential today.

Premodern Americas and *Códice Maya de México*

As best we know, the mathematical concept of zero was independently invented twice, in Babylon between 400 and 500 CE and in the Maya civilization of Mesoamerica before 350 CE (Matson 2009).¹⁴ Paper, too, was invented independently in Egypt, China, and also Mesoamerica. The earliest surviving Mesoamerican bark paper dates to around 100 CE, and evidence of bark paper appears in images dating to 1200–500 BCE (Turner 2002a, 8–9). These two ancient inventions figure in *Códice Maya de México*, an astronomical calendar that is the oldest of the four books that survive from codex-rich pre-Columbian Maya culture. Discovered by looters in the early 1960s, *Códice Maya de México* was authoritatively dated to c. 1100 CE in 2019 (Gutiérrez and Guadarrama 2022). Combined astronomical and art-historical analysis has determined that the book’s intricately illustrated figurations of the activities of Maya gods display pre-Webb, Mesoamerican astronomers’ careful calculation of the phases of Venus during its 260-day path around the sun.¹⁵ Ten of the codex’s original twenty *amate* pages survive, constituting the oldest extant book in the Americas and the best tangible evidence of a vibrantly literate medieval culture.¹⁶

“Pre-Hispanic Maya history,” writes Jesús Guillermo Kantún Rivera, “occupies no more than a couple of pages in basic school textbooks in Mexico” (2022, 63). Hundreds of books were burned by sixteenth-century Spanish invaders, and subsequent governments continue to suppress native oral tradition even to the present day. *Códice Maya de México* has been named an “archaeological object, patrimony of Mexico” (Gutiérrez and Guadarrama 2022, 55), but its significance is little recognized by the general population, and the codex itself has rarely been displayed. Outside of archaeological sites, museum collections, and the European libraries in Dresden, Madrid, and Paris that house the

¹² On race theory, antisemitism, and the West’s self-perceived exceptionality, see Heng 2018, 20–7. On the intersection of medieval antisemitism and the nascent “racial state,” see Heng 2018, 55–109, and 2019; and Seal 2022. Lavezzo 2016 offers an insightful analysis of how antisemitism figures in medieval English literature. Strickland 2003 collects numerous medieval images in which Jews, Africans, and Asians are portrayed as biologically and ethically monstrous; see also Friedman 1981.

¹³ Heng 2018 examines the global scope of European views on race in the Middle Ages; see also Whitaker 2019.

¹⁴ The mathematician Fibonacci introduced zero to Italy c. 1200.

¹⁵ Remarkably, “the divinatory 260-day count, or *cholq’ij*, is still in use” in isolated Maya areas of Guatemala, “and has continued to be a cornerstone of the life and identity of Maya peoples for two thousand years” (Kantún Rivera 2022, 65).

¹⁶ It is typical of the diminishment of Maya accomplishment that the Wikipedia article “History of Paper” states that *amate*, like papyrus, is “not considered true paper.”

three other extant Maya books, the intellectual culture of the Maya Middle Ages has been all but erased.

Medieval studies can play a lead role in converting this dismal narrative into both a celebration and a scholarly examination of Maya culture and, by extension, of past, present, and future First Peoples cultures across the Americas. The more we know of the history of the triumphs, despairs, and daily lives of the pre-Columbian cultures that are part of our world's origin story, the better we will be able to construct a broader version of human history. Medieval studies is not divorced from an understanding of the history of the Americas, but is, rather, essential to it. As people and governments across the globe struggle with the artifices of national borders, medieval studies teaches that walls are never impermeable, that boundaries have always been fluid, and that art, science, and innovation have not ever been confined to particular centuries or continents.¹⁷

Medievalism and *The Fantasy of the Middle Ages*

From the *Chanson de Roland* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* to *Harry Potter* and *The Last Kingdom*, interest in the medieval has always embraced reconstructions of an imagined past. It was part of the craft of Chrétien, Dante, and Chaucer to retell stories both ancient and recent, their ingenuity permitting them to add something more than local color. Marie de France's assertion that she will recount "the tales—and I know they're true— / from which the Bretons made their *lais*" ("les contes ke jo sai verrais / Dunt li Bretun unt fait les *lais*") (*Guigemar* 19–21) resembles Chaucer's declaration two hundred years later that "Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes / Of diverse aventures maden layes ... And oon of hem have I in remembraunce, / Which I shal seyn with good wyl as I kan" (the *Franklin's Tale*, V.710–15). Both poets reference a 'medieval' past that was, to some measure, historical and distanced from themselves by time, space, memory, and imagination. The stories these poets told were respun and reimagined in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tales of Ariosto, Rabelais, Spenser, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Milton, Molière, and others. These writers did not need the descriptor 'medieval' to have an idea of what they were responding to.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, scholars have used the term 'medievalism' to distinguish references and reconstructions from the historical 'medieval,' but, as David Matthews argues, "we today cannot get the medieval without medievalism"; it is "not just that the new field of medievalism studies *should* not preserve a distinction between itself and medieval studies, but that it *cannot*" (2011, 714–15; original emphasis). One of the pleasures of Larisa Grollemond and Bryan C. Keene's *The Fantasy of the Middle Ages* is the care with which the authors juxtapose images of the medieval, which extend from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscript illustrations and maps, to nineteenth-century paintings and engravings, to twentieth- and twenty-first-century fashion designs and film stills. The "boundary between history and fantasy" (2022, 25) is breached in almost every image, such that the distinction between 'medieval' and 'medievalism' appears as no more than a matter of chronology: an image drawn in the fourteenth century is medieval, while another one drawn in the nineteenth century is the product of medievalism.

¹⁷ The essays on indigenous cultures in Andrews and Beechy 2020 offer alternative approaches to situating the European Middle Ages in a global context.

Contemporary audiences were in each case enticed by representations of the fantastic. The artists who created the images sought, surely, to delight, but in many instances they also sought to instruct. The abiding appeal of the medieval fantastic—evidenced in the eager modern reception for medieval-themed novels and graphic novels, movies and television programs, video games and board games, theme parks and fairs, fashion and costume design—is in itself a reason why *academic* medieval studies is essential. Though our present emphasis differs from that of Carolyn Dinshaw, who argues that “amateurs have something to teach the experts: namely that the present moment is more temporally heterogeneous than academically disciplined, historically minded scholars tend to let on,” we share her keen assessment that anachronism and queered temporality permeate much medieval scholarship, and that “some kind of desire for the past motivates all our work” (2012, xiv). All of us—students, scholars, and the large and enthusiastic public—benefit when our understanding of medieval artifacts is founded in the lived reality that modern historiography, archaeology, anthropology, science, and literary study have enabled us to recover.

Conclusion

In order to understand the present or create a willed future, we need to come to grips with the past and know the forces that have produced the modern world. The books highlighted in this article evince the value of a medieval studies attuned to the needs of contemporary societies. Underlying *Teaching the Global Middle Ages* is the conviction that regional medieval cultures were never as isolated as people have imagined. The trans-geographical networks of the Middle Ages expose how notions of impermeable borders and racially pure regional identities are mythical. Understanding interconnectedness helps us bridge the imagined gap between past and present, and enables us to navigate more honestly the current connected globe.

In a similar vein, *The Fantasy of the Middle Ages* reminds us that medievalists need not cede the terrain of contemporary representation to fantasists, xenophobes, and supremacists. Rather, we can take advantage of the allure of the Middle Ages as a means to illuminate positive values (and challenge negative ones) inherited from our forebears. The struggle between Jedi knights and Imperial tyrants, between dark wizards and those with rainbow hues, between good witches and bad, is a perennial battle.

That the name and poetry of “Crestiens li gois” may reflect a response to the trauma of the holocaust says something intensely personal about a foundational Arthurian author whose chivalric imaginary has spread from its origins in twelfth-century Britain and France to a vast popularity around the globe. But the significance of this self-identification transcends the personal. The maligned Other—usually subordinate, often enslaved, occasionally powerful—has always been with us.

Centuries of observation enabled Maya astronomers to chart the paths of Venus and the other “wandering stars.” Andrew D. Turner observes that “Códice Maya de México was not a record of what happened when Venus appeared on certain dates; it was a guide that warned users of what *could* happen when Venus would appear at certain foretold times over a period of 104 years” (2022a, 32; original emphasis). Like Greek, Roman, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Indian, and Chinese visionaries, medieval Maya astronomers thought that they could harness science to predict calamity or triumph, respond to celestial cues, and thereby influence the future. Correspondingly, as the product of millennia of human endeavor, the James Webb Space Telescope is the most powerful instrument ever

built for delving into the history of the universe. Yet, as medievalists recognize, it, too, is not entirely new. The goal of the scientists who designed it aligns with those of ancient and medieval astronomers, mathematicians, and humanists, who themselves united to study the workings of the universe and humans' place in it. A vibrant medieval studies is essential if we are to understand the continuum that has brought us to the world we now inhabit.

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