of this fascination with race. He concludes, for instance, by interviewing Lloyd King, the child of a black father and white mother, a musician who loves jazz because of its mixture of European and African musical cultures. "The real tragedy between blacks and whites in America is not that we hate each other," King says.

> Hatred by itself is a pretty shallow force and can only cut so deep. The real tragedy is that we love and admire each other. American culture as we know it would not exist if this weren't so. The tragedy lies in the complex folds of this love and admiration, which is somehow twisted into intolerance.... Like a Greek play, there would be no tragedy if it weren't for the love." (397)

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David Aers, ed., *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1992).

This collection of essays is introduced by Aers as an attempt, through "some reference to a defining community," to penetrate the "webs of interlocution" in which the "self exists" and in which it defines itself. This work — a cross-disciplinary effort uniting the talents of both literary critics and historians of culture — examines a selection of late medieval 'texts,' and focuses on a surprisingly cohesive set of aims and concerns. The contributors share both a distrust of the mythology that "has too often encouraged the projection of seamless unities onto the Middle Ages" (81) and a commitment to the relevance of the "text" to larger, "historical" issues. For while Aers is quick to point out that this collection of essays "never share the objectivist illusions of pre-critical positivism," he argues that "they are equally far removed from those who, under the sign 'Derrida,' have denied ... any distinction between true and false claims about the worlds human beings inhabit." (3)

Culture and History succeeds in traversing not only the boundaries separating various academic disciplines, but also discreetly warns against a kind of reverse elitism that may often detract from effective scholarship. As Lee Patterson's paper demonstrates, even a text such as Clanvowe's *Boke of Cupide*, cannot be seen as a mere "court frippery," as "the court is as real as anything else," and "triviality," after all, "can be used to represent reality as well as escape from it." (10)

Miri Rubin and Sarah Beckwith, in their examination of the dramatic and literary tradition surrounding, respectively, "The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities," and the "Medieval Dramas of the Sacramental Body" — as well as Peter Womack's treatment of the shifting composition of theatre audiences in the sixteenth century — follow Patterson's lead in viewing the text from "the level of conscious intention and topical relevance." (10) Yet all three place the most emphasis on the "text" in its function as a means to incorporate diverse and discordant voices straining at the outward integrity of the medieval community.

According to Rubin, "medieval religious culture possessed all the nuances usually associated with language, those of ... the normative and the aberrant, of acquiescence as well as subversion, of inclusion and exclusion." (43) Similarly, while Beckwith sees the fifteenth-century *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* as an attempt to "convert all its outsiders to insiders," she points out that "the very process of the incorporation cannot expel from its own dramatic rendering the riven ambiguities of the divided collectivity whose concern it stages." (65) This emphasis on marginalisation, and the cultural construction of the "Other" (i.e. in stories featuring the eucharist, the Jew or doubting woman) — which by definition contradicts a view of medieval society as harmonious and static — is one shared by all of the contributors to *Culture and History*.

For just as there is danger in "reading" the Middle Ages "like the clerical version of the host — whole in each of its little bits" instead of "as a dramatic process of relation," (81) so too should we beware of a "master narrative" which presents the medieval period as a simple "palindrome of modern life ... a pre-modern society and culture utterly foreign to the modern world that succeeded it." (147) Judith Bennet argues that this, especially in regards to women's history — a discipline that should strive to rewrite the "master narrative," and not "to buttress its crumbling foundations" (165) — sets up a false dichotomy "be-

tween a medieval 'golden age' and an early-modern age of growing inactivity and exploitation." (162)

David Aers expands on this theme in the final chapter, "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject'" — an explicit, and quite sufficiently audible, address to some of his colleagues. Aers questions the tendency within both Cultural Materialism and New Historicism to "[turn] the Middle Ages into a homogeneous and mythical field which is defined in terms of the scholar's need for a figure against which 'Renaissance' concerns with inwardness and the fashioning of identities can be defined as new." (192) The Middle Ages, Aers suggests, was not an enchanted castle in which historical consciousness or interiority slumbered before being roused by (depending on the given theory) Shakespeare, Descartes, Marx or Foucault. To set up such an artificial polarity is to marginalise the historical period preceding one's own area of study, and to portray it as "other, the totally alien or different in which this entity [e.g. individualism] definitely did not exist, indeed against which the entity in question can be defined." (196)

As an antidote to the often dangerous and always tempting blandishments held out by the "simple linear master narrative," *Culture and History* suggests a commitment "to the kind of detailed historical and cross-generic work which radical literary critics have, so far, been rather reluctant to undertake." (197) Aers *et al* certainly cannot be accused of failing to take their own advice. It is to be hoped that historians will see this effort, not as a kind of academic encroachment on their academic terrain, but as a generous invitation to embark on a very promising joint intellectual enterprise. Historians, who are necessarily compelled to generalise the results of their research against the backdrop of the so-called real world, should be pleased by such an overture. Indeed, opposition to these essays is more likely to emanate from the literary community — some members of which may take exception to the way in which the authors postulate a viable existential link between the "text" and its "referentiality to the natural and social worlds." (3)

I should also add that this collection brings to light several late-medieval literary and dramatic works well worthy of further attention. The essays not only broach significant issues, but are consistently engaging, well-written and persuasively argued. At the very least, *Culture and History* should come highly recommended for its relevance and its ready comprehensibility to the student of history. It is pleasant to see, as well be told, that "truth does not always lie at the bottom of a deep well." (195)

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Michael Löwy, ed., *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present* (New Jersey and London: Humanities Press 1992).

It has often been assumed by more cynical observers that Latin American history is rich in revolutionary practice but poor in revolutionary ideas. Michael Löwy's *Marxism in Latin America* is a long overdue response to the charge. It gathers documents to show that a rich body of revolutionary ideas has emerged in the course of the class struggle in the southern half of the American continent. The subtle and penetrating analysis of Jose Carlos Mariategui drew on Marxist debate in Europe but added to it the dimension of indigenous tradition. In the 1990s a myriad of organizations lay claim to the heritage of Mariategui — yet more often than not they parody the complexity of his thought. Sendero Luminoso (to whom there is not a single reference in this volume), for example, summons his authority to legitimate conclusions far distant from his pursuit of a dynamic unity of theory and practice, his clarity on the central role of the producers, and his understanding that the bourgeoisie was too weak and compromised to carry through any socialist transformation of society. Mariategui was not a solitary figure; his journal *Amauta* was itself evidence of a wide-ranging debate which embraced figures of the stature of Luis Emilio Recabarren in Chile, Anibal Ponce in Argentina and Julio Antonio Mella in Cuba.

Löwy locates the ending of this creative period in Latin American Marxism in 1935, to coincide with the defeat of the uprising in El Salvador in 1932 and the failure of the armed insurrection in Brazil in 1935. The dates are