An exasperating and intellectually spurious tendency has plagued medieval studies from their inception. Medieval studies arose during centuries of increasing national awareness and were understandably afflicted with the excesses of ethnic pride which have haunted modern European civilization. Pockets of erudition defined by national and religious identities continue to control the kinds of questions medievalists raise. Yet in recent decades some scholars have recognized the danger of too narrow sights when examining a millennium of human history spared the political and intellectual boundaries of more modern eras.1

A formidable obstacle to the broadening of sights is the enormous pride that medievalists take in their erudition, which too often becomes unnecessarily synonymous with narrowness of scope, with what I choose to call "medieval myopia." Specialization is essential, to be sure, but it need not preclude a larger view. Too many medievalists allow their technical training to blind them to the context as they apply their expertise to the text.

Medieval myopia takes many forms and leads into ever narrower scholarly pursuits in the name of ever higher historical truths. This disease produces an insidious symptom that has played an enormous role in the establishment of geographical priorities and hierarchies among medieval scholars. A pernicious mix of ethnic pride and erudition have led too many historians to declare certain spheres of medieval Europe the necessary focus of scholarly investigation and others unworthy of all but scant recognition. Since I happen to work in Russian history, a field which raises a host of political, religious and social threats and is thus only scantily recognized, I am particularly

1. There are a number of recent interesting works which are inspiring in their breadth and open-mindedness. I cannot cite them all, but wish to express gratitude to a few whose insights have given me the courage to challenge: Fernand Braudel, La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II, 2nd ed. (Paris: Colin, 1966); A. Ia. Gurevich, Kategorii srednevekovoi kul'tury (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972); C. Halperin, "Sixteenth Century Foreign Travel Accounts to Muscovy; A Methodological Excursus," Sixteenth Century Journal, 6, No. 2 (Oct. 1975), 89-111; R. Picchio, "Questione della lingua e Slavia cirillometodiana," Studi sulla questione della lingua presso gli Slavi (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1972), pp. 116-20.
aware of how astonishingly ignorant some of my colleagues are about those medieval societies which are not considered part of the core, only of the periphery. Persuaded that something can be done to broaden the geographic scope of our inquiries, I write this article to suggest how.

The proposals that follow have implications for all of medieval studies, but they focus on the area in which I can legitimately claim expertise: medieval Russian studies, particularly those of the Kievan period, and their place in the medieval scholar's historical perception. I address myself primarily to my colleagues in medieval Slavic history and seek to persuade them that they need not be on the epistemological fringe of medievalia if they seek out collaborative research projects with specialists in other geographic areas. Thus they would help to eradicate the embarrassing ignorance in our profession of one of the more fascinating polities of medieval Europe.

Historians of the easternmost part of the European mainland periodically acknowledge the need to evaluate the relationship of Slavic history to that of the West. Each time we recognize the need and attempt to fill it, despite our noble intentions, we become defensive and parochial. No matter how far back we carry the problem of Russia and the West, we wage an academic cold war based on the suspicions and fears traditionally segregating Slav from non-Slav.2 It is time that we cease verbal fire by organizing conferences among specialists in medieval German history, medieval Scandinavian history, medieval Irish history, Middle Byzantium. In this way we might arrive at a scholarly détente.

It has always seemed to me ironic that scholars of a pre-modern era, whose training and sensibility are so similar, should find more rapport with modernists in their own specialty than with historians of distant, but contemporaneous places. It should be easier and more instructive to analyze a source from twelfth-century Russia with a specialist on twelfth-century Germany than with one on nineteenth-century Russia. Yet this does not happen. We “nationalize” the historical profession as well as the writing of history—at least we Russianists do. And this artificial nationalization seems especially lamentable with respect to Kievan Rus’, a remarkably cosmopolitan society which interacted not only with the West but also with all Christendom and beyond. Kiev had few “hang-ups” about East and West, and the era appears “golden” before the lapse into parochialism brought about after Kiev’s fall in 1169.

Kievan Rus’ remains one of a series of medieval polities slighted by the large majority of medievalists in the West. It would seem that the frontiers