My talk starts from the premise that we now find ourselves as medievalists after the condition that we have conventionally been thinking of as postmodern. It is a strange location of a “double after” (post-postmodern). After an examination of what this strange place might entail, I consider two examples of twelfth-century historical writing, using the problem of reference as a point of departure. The first is a very brief entry in the Hyde Chronicle. The second, Odo of Deuil’s much more elaborated De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem, an eyewitness account of a portion of the disastrous Second Crusade of 1147-49, contains manifestly self-conscious passages that worry precisely over the question of the rhetorical fit between historical action and explanation. I want these examples to lead us to a consideration of the variety of ways that the facts of textuality themselves might give us access to a kind of knowledge of the past after the postmodern transformation in the foundational assumptions about what is involved in historical “evidence” and perhaps more significantly, about whatever the “evidence” is evidence of.

Robert M. Stein
Doris and Carl Kempner Distinguished Professor in the Humanities
Purchase College

Past/Present:
Postmodernity and Historical Knowledge

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Wednesday, February 18
4:30pm
Federal Room, Indiana Memorial Union