

Short Notices

Aers, David, *Salvation and Sin: Augustine, Langland and Fourteenth-Century Theology*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2009; paperback; pp. xv, 284. R.R.P. US\$38.00; ISBN 9780268020330.

In *Salvation and Sin*, David Aers examines with uncompromising clarity and depth the subject that inspires two of the greatest pieces of extant Middle English literature: *Piers Plowman* and the *Showings* of Julian of Norwich. His approach is to examine first selected writings of Augustine whom scholars quote as the foundation of medieval religious thought, then two fourteenth-century theologians, Ockham and Bradwardine, before embarking on the two literary works.

For this reader, the crux of the book is summed up in the statement on page 84 in which Aers promises to ‘sketch the interpretation of sin, grace, and agency in current studies of Langland’s theology. The dominant model has emerged out of a debate over whether *Piers Plowman* is “Augustinian” or “semi-Pelagian” and links Langland with the “modern” theology that Bradwardine sought to defeat’. The rest of the book works towards this statement, although the chapters can easily and usefully be read as separate essays, riveting in their own right. The first chapter on Augustine sets out to make a focused examination of Augustine’s thought which goes far beyond what is usually implied by literary scholars who refer to ‘Augustinianism’ in medieval literature. Aers ranges widely and confidently through Augustine’s works, driving towards the closely argued conclusion that Augustine’s model is one of ‘divine and human agency in which there can be no question of competition or rivalry’ (p. 19).

The chapters on Ockham and Bradwardine make gripping reading: Aers is an accomplished teacher as well as unflinching scholar and these two chapters grapple with some teaching that to a modern reader can be difficult to grasp. Aers reads theology with the close attention of a literary scholar, and in these two chapters the processes of argument and elucidation of medieval thought and theology are as important as the conclusions reached about the work of the two thinkers. These chapters, which examine teaching on God’s agency, the human will, the sacraments, modernism, and Pelagianism, by two widely divergent though contemporary theologians, are rich with material that can be revisited in connection with authors other than Langland and Julian, and with other medieval theologians.

The discussion of *Piers Plowman* takes as its starting point an episode in the poem that is often given cursory treatment by *Piers* scholars, if not avoided altogether: the encounter between the Samaritan and Semivief. Aers uses it to highlight Langland's progressive treatment throughout the poem of the will (Wille) which has become habituated to and weakened by sin, and needs the healing agency of Christ in the sacraments. His discussion of Julian's *Showings*, by contrast, discovers discrepancies in her account of human agency and responsibility which 'generate serious difficulties for the doctrines of reconciliation and Christology' (p. 169).

Aers's evident excitement in the process of examining these authors is catching. His hope that the critical engagement with both the work of Julian and Langland will inspire further study of these great thinkers and writers has certainly spurred this reader to return to them with renewed vigour. The book is not an easy read but is a rewarding one and I recommend it for anyone who seeks to grasp further the profoundly theological foundations of medieval thought.

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Badir, Patricia, *The Maudlin Impression: English Literary Images of Mary Magdalene, 1550–1700*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2009; paperback; pp. 320; 37 illustrations; R.R.P. US\$38.00; ISBN 9780268022150.

Patricia Badir examines the figure of Mary Magdalene in England from the Reformation to the Restoration. Exploring drama, poetry, sermons, and artworks, she argues that Mary Magdalene served as a 'site of memory' (p. 3) that could transcend the rupture with the medieval past, and evoke the experience of Christ's physical presence for those generations deprived of the Eucharist after the rejection of transubstantiation.

Chapter 1 focuses on Mary Magdalene's conversion (Luke 7) and Lewis Wager's play *The Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdalene*. Mary's conversion transforms the sinful Magdalene, representing Catholicism and the past, into a reformed, Protestant Mary. She is, however, also a site of continuity: while proclaiming this break with the past, the play's success depends on the non-scriptural medieval construction of Mary Magdalene as an aristocratic prostitute. Washing Christ's feet, the dramatic Magdalene allows the audience to imagine 'how it feels to touch Christ' (p. 47), an experience now rendered inaccessible.

In Chapter 2, Badir notes 'Christ's vanishing human presence' (p. 56) in poems by Robert Southwell, Richard Verstegan, and others, in which Mary Magdalene replaces Christ as a site of memory. Mary expresses grief, loss, and yearning at the sepulchre over the missing body of Christ (John 20) and her affective response to the risen Christ offers an 'idea' of his presence built on her memory of the past.

Chapter 3 studies the contemplative Mary, sister of Martha (Luke 10). For John Donne, Nicholas Breton, and Aemilia Lanyer, Mary Magdalene becomes a model for virtuous women. Instead of touching Christ, Mary experiences Christ the Word, serenely reading the Scriptures and reflecting. This contemplative Mary, as artworks (many helpfully reproduced here in halftone) reveal, owes something to the legendary hermit Magdalene.

Chapters 4 and 5 chart the 'secularisation' of Mary Magdalene as 'the subject of prayer becomes the object of art' (p. 157) in poetry (Herbert, Crashaw, Herrick, and Vaughan), prints, and paintings, where 'the beauty of holiness' (p. 189) increasingly appeals to connoisseurs and collectors.

Finally, the sensual Magdalene of the Restoration reflects the period's decadence. Aphra Behn's *The Rover* and portraits of courtesans *à la Madeleine* reveal that, while traces of Mary Magdalene remained, the Restoration Magdalene represented illicit pleasure rather than pointing to Christ. Even so, Badir suggests, Mary Magdalene continues to function as a site of memory in which the medieval Magdalene and something of the inaccessible past can be traced.

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Bernard, G. W., *Anne Boleyn: Fatal Attractions*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2010; cloth; pp. 256; 16 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. US\$30.00; ISBN 9780300162455.

For over twenty years, Professor Bernard has been offering, in a series of published articles, a critical view of accepted accounts of Anne Boleyn. This book draws his analysis together in a portrait that attempts to demolish the views promoted by historians such as Eric Ives and Retha Warnicke that make Boleyn an important player in the process by which a Protestant church became established in England.

His approach is to re-examine the commonly used surviving primary sources, arguing that most of them are too slight or too ambiguous to support the edifice that has been constructed on them. At the same time, he promotes

other material usually regarded as unreliable to a more important position. He dismisses Sanders's admittedly late story of Anne's miscarriage of 'a shapeless mass of flesh' as 'too vague' (p. 127), while accepting the accounts of the imperial ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, whose reliability is usually questioned. He puts considerable weight on the account in Lancelot de Carles's French poem *Epistre contenant la process criminal faict contra Anna Boullant d'Angleterre* although he does not discuss the variants in the manuscripts of the poem, the literary conventions it employs, or the audience for which it was written.

This is mainly because, in Bernard's view, Henry was the one in control of developments at this and every other time. It was not Anne who resisted his sexual advances for so long but Henry who restrained himself because of his anxiety to have a legitimate heir. Bernard's evaluation of events seems in some cases to be influenced by his own underlying concepts of human behaviour. If his overall argument is convincing it will require historians interested in the position and power of women in the period to reassess their understanding of their ability to act independently at the highest levels of society.

Paradoxically perhaps, Bernard also argues that Anne's behaviour with other men at court at the least went 'far beyond the formal conventions' (p. 162) and seeks to demonstrate 'his hunch' (p. 192) that she was probably guilty of the crimes of which she was convicted. His approach is to invite the reader to 'imagine Anne ... enjoying relationships with her courtier servants that went far beyond the contemporary conventions of courtly love, the platonic gallant courtship of married women' (p. 187).

In the plethora of studies of Anne Boleyn it is useful to have one that challenges the canonical interpretation but Bernard's rereading of the sources, ambiguous as they are, does not in the end produce a clinching argument.

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Davis, Carmel Bendon, *Mysticism and Space: Space and Spatiality in the Works of Richard Rolle, The Cloud of Unknowing Author, and Julian of Norwich*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 2008; cloth; pp. xiii, 271; R.R.P. US\$74.95; ISBN 9780813215228.

Mysticism and Space is a treatise on the role of space, of the physical and spiritual kinds, in the mystical teachings of three major Middle English writers. Beginning with general discussions of physical space, social space, and the intersections of space and text, it concludes with separate discussions of Richard Rolle's works, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Julian's *Revelation of Love*.

Much of the merit of this book lies in its close reading of the three authors, with attention to their deployment of space as a metaphor and their descriptions of physical and mystical space. This includes an exploration of the detailed descriptions of physical objects and experiences, and their role in the crossover into mystical experience. Detailed consideration is given to the use of physical spatial indicators to describe spiritual experiences. Davis's teasing out of the varied and sometimes apparently contradictory spatial terms, such as up and down or empty and full, provokes a thoughtful realignment of our readings, providing an added dimension and richness.

The groundwork for this close reading is laid in the opening chapters, where there is some heavy-duty theory: but this forms a solid basis from which to reappraise the texts. Davis makes much of the 'mise-en-abîme', the visual illusion where a picture contains a smaller version of itself, which contains another, yet smaller, version, repeated infinitely: this is an apt spatial metaphor for the infiniteness of God's love, but she perhaps overstates its presence in the texts.

Although many threads are teased out in the book, Davis seems to find one key theme in each author. For Rolle, this is the tripartite nature of the mystical experience, as in the Trinity, the relationship between Christ, the reader, and Rolle as mediator, his experience of *canor*, *calor*, and *dulcor*, and his afterlife division of those who have loved God much, more, and most.

For the *Cloud* author, the theme is enclosure. The contemplative is enclosed between the clouds of forgetting and unknowing, echoing the physical enclosure of contemplatives in their earthly lives. Davis discusses the *Cloud* author's presentation of the contemplative as both enclosing contemplation and being enclosed by it.

The theme that Davis finds in Julian is translocation and liminality. She draws out the way in which the entirety of Julian's revelation takes place while she is confined, unmoving and deeply ill, to a bed in a room adorned by a crucifix, and this physical reality is never quite left behind in her account of the revelation. It juxtaposes with the 'world in a walnut' image to constantly remind the reader of the presence of space in the mystical experience. This intelligent and sensitive book has something to offer anyone with an interest in Middle English texts, mysticism, or spirituality.

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Kafescioğlu, Çiğdem, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (Buildings, Landscapes, and Societies), University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009; cloth; pp. xxxii, 346; 8 colour plates, 154 b/w illustrations, 3 maps; R.R.P. US\$100.00; ISBN 9780271027760.

There is much to recommend in Çiğdem Kafescioğlu's carefully researched and elegant book, not the least of which is a thorough analysis of the transformation of Byzantine Constantinople into Ottoman Istanbul. Beginning with the capture of the city in 1453, the book covers the three decades of urban renewal that correspond to the reign of the victorious Sultan Mehmed II, and the establishment of a new cultural, political, and religious capital for the Ottoman Empire. Kafescioğlu masterfully accounts for the urban reconstructions and interventions that allowed for the new Istanbul to be cemented in the public consciousness and imagination, or as Kafescioğlu aptly states, 'the creation of a capital city through the interpretation and appropriation of another' (p. 1).

As Kafescioğlu points out, the late fifteenth century coincided with an outpouring of Ottoman historical writing. Yet the scope here is not restricted to text, and visual analyses inform much of the discussion, especially in the third (and best) chapter, which focuses on Early Modern visual representations of Istanbul in both Western and Ottoman traditions. Indeed, throughout his lively and engaging analysis of the urban environment, Kafescioğlu calls upon an impressive range of evidence, including architecture, cartography, epics, hagiographies, poetry, travellers' accounts, and town records. This diversity strengthens the proceedings considerably.

Given the myriad materials that Kafescioğlu is dealing with, his careful attention to organization is also to be commended. The first chapter focuses on the six years immediately following the 1453 conquest, and the initial interventions into the existing cityscape. The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque was of course vested with great political and religious symbolism, and is carefully characterized. Other early interventions were far from being as radical, and were focused instead on matters of practical concern. It should not be forgotten that chroniclers described Constantinople as destitute at the time of its fall, and the rehabilitation of city walls, port, and markets are discussed at length as essential and practical components for the success of the city in its new role as Ottoman capital.

Political, religious, and social ideals are reflected in the 'monumentalization' of Istanbul, the subject of Chapter 2. With the centralization of Ottoman wealth and power, and the development of an imperialist vision

came Mehmed's 1459 campaign to rebuild the capital. Some of the most detailed and original research emerges here, with thorough discussions of the Topkapi Palace and Mehmed's New Mosque as new symbols of the Ottoman Empire. Also highlighted by material evidence are interactions between Byzantine and Ottoman urban planning traditions, and the use of Italian Renaissance architectural forms and theories. The fourth chapter focuses on residential neighborhoods and settlement, to complete the picture of the urban fabric of the new capital.

Overall, this book is a satisfying account of the early modern monumentalization, representation, and inhabitation of one of the most intriguing and complex of all cities. As a characterization of the many identities of Constantinople/Istanbul, this book will be of great interest to historians of art, architecture, and urban planning.

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Kassler, Jamie C., *The Honourable Roger North, 1651–1734: On Life, Morality, Law and Tradition*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. 484; 8 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9780754658863.

Roger North suffered the fate of many on the wrong side of politics: for centuries his writing was denigrated by those who provided the consensus view of the period in which he lived. For some decades now, Jamie Kassler, with one or two devoted co-workers such as Mary Chan, Janet D. Hine, and Peter Millard, has been labouring to reinstate him as a seriously neglected thinker in a number of intellectual fields. Kassler's initial interest in North's musical ideas developed into a wider concern for his understanding of human behaviour and the basis of state authority. This has meshed with current scholarly interest in the development of an integrated theory of the psycho-physical nature of human cognition. The new perception that there may be musical models for understanding human character, and that the role of music in healing was an important aspect of medical theory in his time, has stimulated wider interest in North.

Unfortunately, not only were the works that were printed badly bowdlerized but the mass of North's surviving manuscripts, written over a 40-year period, are undated, sometimes rewritten, re-attempts at the same question, or partly destroyed. If they can be put in chronological order they offer the prospect of a rarely available study of the development of an individual's thought, from youth to old age. To provide a basis for

understanding North's manner of working, Jamie Kassler and Mary Chan first produced an exhaustive index of all his works, a necessary basis for further study but only a preliminary approach to his ideas.

This book provides a further contribution to the examination of his thought. Kassler has transcribed and painstakingly edited a work hitherto only in manuscript, entitled *Of Etymology*. The title is partially misleading as North moves from a defence of etymology and a justification of the importation of foreign words into English, by way of relating law and language, to a consideration of systems of law and the promotion of English common law as a highly desirable form of rule. The edition is prefaced by a long study of North's way of writing and his ideas about the right way to live independently. In this, Kassler uses a wide range of his works and attempts to fit them into the framework of the better-known political theorists of the time.

Readers unfamiliar with North's work would do best to start with the edition as it will give them a clear idea of his style and approach in a single coherent text dating from some time after 1706. Kassler's analysis shows where and how North offers other interpretations which is important but frequently confusing and better appreciated when a single thread has been grasped. This is a scholarly and thoughtful work which presents a coherent interpretation of North. Historians may wish to cavil at some of the background provided but it does not detract from the value of the study.

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Kaufman, Alexander L., *The Historical Literature of the Jack Cade Rebellion*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. 242; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754667032.

Alexander Kaufman's new text on the 1450 English uprising by Jack Cade and his followers is a focused analysis of the chronicles written in the fifteenth century which reported on this event. Kaufman's chief argument is that a divergent set of viewpoints can be located in the chronicles, rather than seeing them as reporting a 'single, unified grand narrative' (p. 1). To draw out and explain the diversity that infused chronicle accounts of the rebellion, Kaufman integrates theoretical explanations for the construction of narrative into his analysis.

A central feature of this text is Kaufman's sense of the literary quality of the chroniclers of the fifteenth century, and he stresses the literary and narrative sophistication of the chronicles and the capacity of the chroniclers to write interesting and exciting work. In staking this claim on the chroniclers'

behalf, Kaufman pushes against what he views as the value judgements that informed many earlier scholarly assessments of fifteenth-century literature, which have tended to diminish or dismiss the literary capacity of the chroniclers. Kaufman's own sense of the chronicles' literary and dramatic quality is accounted for by him as a highly personal reaction to the drama which he found when reading the chronicles. To an extent, however, the theoretical insights which he applies in this text also demand him to make these claims; dealing as these theories do with questions of narrative and the construction of narrative threads, Kaufman is obliged to find in these works the signs of dramatic ability which his theory insists should be there.

The consideration of audience is also central to this text. Kaufman persuasively asserts the dramatic potential of the chroniclers' work by pointing to the readership of the chronicles, which comprised not only employers, but guild members and London's ruling elite. In this case, Kaufman's arguments for the chroniclers' need and capacity to produce dramatically interesting works is well founded.

A further strength of the book is Kaufman's sense of the wider context of the Wars of the Roses and the way the Cade Rebellion should be interpreted as part of this context. Kaufman shows a firm grasp of the sources for this broader context and makes a good case for reading the Cade Rebellion within this context.

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Lynch, Andrew and Scott, Anne, eds, *Renaissance Poetry and Drama in Context: Essays for Christopher Wortham*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars, 2008; hardback; pp. xii, 353; 18 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £39.99, \$US59.99; ISBN 9781847186102.

The editors of this diverse collection of articles, in honour of a former colleague at the University of Western Australia, have organized them remarkably well around a common theme. Most of the articles discuss aspects of Shakespeare's plays in the context of their time, in the process bringing both the plays and their authors closer to us as people and to our own time.

Ann Blake, for instance, argues that Shakespeare's memory of scenes of violence in the old cycle plays which he saw as a young teenager came back to touch off ideas for violent scenes in his own plays. Human memory feeds the creative process, she reminds us, and violent action has always been the essence of theatre. Joost Daalder discusses proto-Freudian studies of madness in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays in which the playwrights discount the usual

explanation of their time, imbalance in the humors in our bodies, to point rather to the unconscious at work in their characters and so to human beings at large. Robert White suggests that Shakespeare, in his original conception of *King Lear*, was unsure of its genre, simply unable to make up his mind about it: 'each character seems to know he or she exists in a play, at the mercy of its plot and genre, but each has a different notion of what kind of play they are in and even what the plot is'. Such indecision makes Shakespeare a more human figure.

There are also a number of essays on seventeenth-century English poets like John Donne and Andrew Marvell, and a solitary one on a French poet, Maurice Scève, all well written but inevitably overshadowed by the attention that the volume gives to drama and by the immediacy of drama itself.

Perhaps the most compelling of the articles is the concluding essay by Chris Wortham, whose career the collection is honouring, and his Australian-born wife Anne. The Worthams give a warmly human and at times touching account of their lives in South Africa and in Australia. Chris's story is one of many who migrated from South Africa to Perth in the 1970s and later – which gives this collection a special importance as an enduring memorial to those who influenced that generation in West Australian history.

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Pérez-Alfaro, Christina Jular and **Estepa Díez**, Carlos, eds, *Land, Power, and Society in Medieval Castile: A Study of Behetría Lordship* (The Medieval Countryside, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; hardback; pp. xiv, 338; 10 b/w tables, 11 b/w line art; R.R.P. €70.00; ISBN 9782503526232.

In the period historians generally classify as 'feudal', the canonical understanding of social power relations is still largely based on French and English material and postulates a vague but persistent idea of a 'pure' feudal form which is critical to interpretation of the period. Recognition that political structures, social hierarchies, and the distribution of power in the period have a much more varied pattern that markedly differentiates the various territories of Europe has been slow to take hold. The work in this area of scholars published in languages other than English has tended to be confined to small academic communities and largely dismissed as peripheral in influential general textbooks.

This collection of essays from Spanish experts on Behetría lordship and the distinctiveness of Spanish feudal relationships should inspire a

reassessment of some of the fundamental assumptions of the common view. The editors define this Castilian term as 'a peculiar form of lordship that linked lay lords both to their dependent peasants and to royal power' (p. xi). In some interpretations this is seen as critical to the distinctive creation of a Spanish identity.

For reasons that have been hotly disputed between iconic Spanish historians like Sancho-Albornoz and Américo Castro but which possibly relate to the Reconquest of Spain, Behetría relationships differ from those common in other parts of Europe. Recent work, though, has established links to similar institutions elsewhere. The best-known feature of this legal structure is the right of peasants of free status to choose their lords. These were lay lords mostly of the lower or middle nobility as the system was not available to ecclesiastical lords. By the mid-fourteenth century, the system which had been dominant in the twelfth century was losing ground as such lordships were changed into other forms. Attempts by the *hidalgos* to abolish it completely, however, failed.

The theme of the collection turns on an analysis of Behetría's development in the context of the exercise of power by the monarch, the lord, and the peasant in particular territorial structures and geographical areas. Two case studies – that of the Rojas and the Velascos – serve to illustrate the complexities of the situation, and the difficulties in collecting and interpreting the evidence.

The papers on the peasantry in the Behetría system, tease out the changes that occurred in the position of the peasant and the factors that eroded their independence. This was not a simple conflict between lord and peasant. Isabel Alfonso Anton shows how important intra-noble conflict and disputes between lay and ecclesiastical lords contributed to the creation and alteration of the social and economic hierarchy.

The editors have designed the volume to enlighten the general reader but the discussions require a considerable willingness to master unfamiliar detail. The result, however, is well worthwhile.

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Reiger, Gabriel A., *Sex and Satiric Tragedy in Early Modern England: Penetrating Wit* (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama), Farnham, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. ix, 147; 2 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £45.00; ISBN 9781409400295.

Gabriel Rieger argues that a ban on sexual verse satire in 1599 encouraged young intellectuals to explore sexual language and symbolism through drama. Sexual experience provided common ground for the diversity of the theatrical audience; but similarly, satiric castigation, could become partially reflexive. Rieger discusses *Hamlet* and gender; *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* and sexual disease; *The Changeling* and the theology of sin; and *Othello* on sex and service. In each play, he identifies a specific satiric type, an alienated character, or a frustrated aspirant aware of the corruptions around him. It is a helpful distinction taken to a fascinatingly difficult topic, with the spectre of syphilis being well handled (pp. 53–60).

Insight notwithstanding, the text is burdened by lumbering repetition of argument and vocabulary. Six times in one short paragraph we are told that satire is 'aggressive' (p. 20–21); five times in another that the satirist assumes a 'posture' (p. 9). There is no grasp of anaphora. Neither was satire, as we are sometimes told, restricted to attacking 'crime'; the meaning of reflexivity is distorted if it embraces the satirist's audience (p. 19). If the situation with the impending death of Elizabeth was familiar, it was not also unique (p. 29). The relationships between stoicism and satire are forced, and the sense of inference throughout uncertain; but then 'logical' (p. 33) appears to mean what can be expected. Lear was not 'deposed' (p. 6), the meaning of 'morally normative' (p. 32) eludes me. Characters are 'conflicted', Marston creates 'a disconnect' (p. 24).

The eradication of such infelicities might have converted a short book into more readable articles. But they are additionally indicative of the systemic anachronism that artlessly conflates modern terms and concepts with the intentions putatively informing the evidence, while largely ignoring the categories through which writers did organize their work. In what sense were playwrights secular intellectuals, bishops critics of pornography, or any of them concerned to construct ideologies? The designation of satire per se as a genre is incoherent. The image of Elizabethan society is both sketchy and historiographically outmoded (declining aristocracy, unprecedented social mobility, gender anxiety etc.). It is a significant problem in a work insisting that historical reality helps explain satire. A more thorough historical awareness of sexual imagery in satire might also have acted as a prophylactic

against over-stated claims. Erasmus (on satiric reflexivity) and Aristophanes (on the obvious) are unmentioned.

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Trilling, Renée R., *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (Toronto Anglo-Saxon), Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009; cloth; pp. 352; R.R.P. CA\$70.00; ISBN 9780802099716.

The study of nostalgia in literary texts is currently very much in vogue and Renée Trilling's work represents a timely contribution to the discussion. In this well researched book, Trilling aims to explore the artistic impetus behind the representation of the past in Old English verse by assembling an aesthetic record and demonstrating the use of nostalgia as a tool in Anglo-Saxon historical texts.

The book is wide ranging, both temporally and in terms of genre. Trilling discusses a large number of very disparate pieces of Anglo-Saxon verse and prose, both secular and religious, from *Cædmon's Hymn* to the *Death of Edward*. The introduction eloquently addresses the problem of defining nostalgia for a period which had not yet coined the term, and in which the longing is frequently presented not for a home but for an imagined time and space.

The book has five main chapters and a summarizing conclusion. The first on art and history focuses on *Deor* and *Widsith* and in it Trilling advocates the application of Walter Benjamin's concept of 'the constellation' to Old English verse, an idea carried forward throughout the book. Chapter 2 explores biblical and salvation history and deals with the entirety of the Junius XI manuscript. The chapter is ambitious in its scope, but the very distinct nature of the poems makes reading them as a coherent unit challenging, and Trilling's argument does not resolve the problem.

The final three chapters are devoted to verse and prose texts about events in the history of Anglo-Saxon England. Trilling's latter chapters are the most successful: her work is more persuasive when discussing those texts with an obviously historical concern, presenting an engaging argument for connecting the aesthetics of these verses with their historical content. It is pleasing to see the often overlooked late Old English verses found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* receiving scholarly attention, and Trilling's work ought to draw further consideration.

The book makes a useful contribution to the field: it is thought provoking, up-to-date and extensively referenced. However, there is a tendency to

indulge in sweeping statements, which, while evocative, are not supported and serve to obscure the substance of the author's argument. This book would therefore be best suited to advanced students and those who already have a good knowledge of the material discussed, for whom it will provide a stimulus to further debate and research.

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