

Reviews

Baranski, Zygmunt G. and Theodore J. Cachey, Jr., eds, *Petrarch and Dante: Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition* (The William and Katherine Devers Series in Dante Studies), Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2009; paperback; pp. 432; R.R.P. US\$50.00; ISBN 9780268022112.

The work of Francesco Petrarca (or Petrarch, 1304–74) influenced important European Renaissance writers such as Pietro Bembo, Torquato Tasso, Pierre Ronsard, Etienne Jodelle, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Sir Philip Sidney, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, and many others. Yet their verses often reveal the nature of this obligation to be dark and ambivalent; poets tend to minimize Petrarch's influence through direct criticism, even as they acknowledge, by the very act of writing within Petrarchan confines, that it must be honoured. The challenge for all who followed Petrarch's footsteps was to prove their poetic mettle within his venerable tradition by finding an original way in which to subvert it.

It was therefore interesting and richly rewarding to learn that Petrarch had a similar attitude to Dante, his famous predecessor. Although aware that nobody – not even he – could possibly think and write in Trecento Italy without responding to Dante's work, Petrarch appears to have done his utmost to circumvent acknowledgment and conceal and code Dante's influence so as to reduce the visibility of his homage. Zygmunt Baranski and Theodore Cachey's book, based on a series of seminars given to celebrate the seventh centenary of Petrarch's birth, organized by the William and Katherine Devers Program in Dante Studies, and held at the University of Notre Dame during the fall of 2004, to coincide with the visiting professorship of Baranski, is a delight to read. Contributors to this volume all presented at the seminar, and their ultimate goal – and therefore that of the book – was to move beyond the simple juxtaposition of 'Petrarch and Dante', which they thought was too often reduced to critically inert descriptions of the pervasive inter-discursive presence of 'Dante in Petrarca'.

According to Cachey ('Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomeon to a Critical Discourse'), the most important conclusion of the volume is that Petrarch ought to be considered within the tradition of the Trecento *anti-dantismo*. Petrarch's shift from Latin to the vernacular becomes especially evident after 1359, the date of the letter *Familiare* 21.15, 'To

Giovanni Boccaccio, a defense against an accusation by envious people', in which Petrarch famously claims never to have possessed a *Commedia* before Boccaccio sent him one copied in his own hand, and to have avoided reading Dante so as not to be unduly influenced by him. (This view seems to be in accordance with Petrarch's views on originality expressed elsewhere; in *De Vita Solitaria*, for example, he argues that a writer must be isolated in order to be original.) We learn also that, in his *Canzoniere* 189, which ended the first part of the *Canzoniere* in 1359, the very year in which the *Familiare* 21.15 letter was written, Petrarch mounts a subtle thematic war with Dante; that, in *Triumph of Love*, he subverts Dante's extraordinary and unprecedented theological claims for Beatrice (see Baranski, 'Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti'); and that, despite Petrarch's extensive knowledge of Dante, well-proven in scholarly literature, the only explicit mention of Dante *auctor* in all his works appears in a commentary on the work of Roman geographer Pomponius Mela, *Chorografia*, where Petrarch directly contradicts Dante's authority. It is this 'marginality and the overdetermined character' of Petrarch's attitude to Dante, which has largely escaped scholarly scrutiny, that is the backbone of the collection (pp. 8–11).

In her article, Sarah Sturm-Maddox argues that Petrarch, unlike Dante, traced his own literary identity back to the early humanists of Padua, especially Albertino Mussato, who had preceded him in obtaining the honour of the laurel crown. Cachey proposes influence by Cecco d'Ascoli, author of *Acerba*, who was known for his *anti-dantismo* and burned at the stake in 1327; the influences of *Acerba* on *Il Canzoniere* are many and well documented.

In other contributions, Teodolinda Barolini offers a reading of the valences of Petrarch's vocabulary to show departures from Dante, while Christian Moevs focuses on Petrarch's *Familiare* 20.15 as the document 'stripping Dante of the powerful mythology he created around his own literary project'. Justin Steinberg shows that Petrarch deliberately excluded poems containing responses to Dante's *Commedia* from the final version of *Il Canzoniere* and Giuseppe Mazzotta's 'Petrarch's Dialogue with Dante' offers a way of reconciling the two poets.

This well-organized and beautifully written book is a rich treasure-trove of carefully traced evidence ranging across Petrarch's opus, offering intriguing new perspectives on the close yet fraught relationship between two intellectual giants.

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Barber, Peter and Tom Harper, *Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda and Art*, London, British Library Publishing, 2010; paperback; pp. 176; 150 colour illustrations; R.R.P. £17.95; ISBN 9780712350938.

Whitfield, Peter, *The Image of the World: 20 Centuries of World Maps*, London, British Library Publishing, 2010; paperback; pp. 152; 70 colour illustrations; R.R.P. £18.95; ISBN 9780712350891.

The British Library has played an important role in the growing scholarship around the history of cartography and has published many significant books on the subject including Alfred Hiatt's *Terra Incognita: Mapping the Antipodes before 1600* (2008) and Alessandro Scafi's *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (2006). These are meticulously researched, scholarly books. The Library has also published more popular, lavishly illustrated works, of which these two are good examples. They follow a simple format: a series of short chapters, each of which is accompanied by a series of illustrated examples with detailed explanatory entries. While both books conform to this format, they also make an interesting contrast. Peter Whitfield's *The Image of the World* is a new edition of a 1994 work, while that by Peter Barber and Tom Harper reveals how much the field has developed since the earlier work appeared.

When it first appeared, Whitfield's book reflected a new approach to cartographical history that re-examined the merits of these maps not just in terms of scientific accuracy but also linked them to their historical context, to the histories of ideas and of art. The book benefits from the work of such scholars as Peter Barber and David Woodward, and the multi-volume *The History of Cartography*, the first volume of which appeared in 1987. It begins by briefly outlining the classical antecedents, including Ptolemy, although the sequence of maps begins with the medieval *mappamundi*, including the Beatus and Evesham examples, the latter a new discovery when the book first appeared. It also includes individual examples from contemporary Jainist, Islamic, and Chinese map-making. The range of maps is impressive, with the majority coming from the sixteenth century, and surprisingly few from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Despite Whitfield's constant referral to the political and social assumptions made in the construction of these maps, the book is very British, or rather Eurocentric in focus. The absence of the 'radical' Australian critique of world maps, *McArthur's Universal Corrective Map of the World*, first published in 1979, is surprising, but even more surprising is the reproduction of Al-Idrisi's 1456 map that is 'inverted for the sake of clarity', so that north is shown at the top. Whitfield also describes a 1906 'Pirate-Traveller' map as 'Pacific-centric' because of the attention given to the west coast of the

Americas, despite the absence of most Pacific nations and only fragments of Australia and New Zealand.

For me, some of the most annoying features of this book are technical, although some are also scholarly. Several maps are not precisely registered so that there is a noticeable blurring of colours and text, while the reproductions do not have the precision such detailed artefacts require. The spreading of many of these maps across two pages also results in some crucial elements being lost in the fold. Another inexplicable design decision was the colourization of some maps 'in the style of the period'. This is also so clumsily done that fine details are obscured. And why have the provenance and library references been excluded? Scale and medium are also left out from the image descriptions. To be fair, a later book by Whitfield, *London: A life in maps* (2006) does include such details and also reflects a more scholarly approach.

Barber and Harper's reproductions are much more carefully printed, probably reflecting the continuing improvements in print technology, although there are still the frustrations of two-page spreads. The captions are sufficiently detailed to satisfy the most pedantic of academics and contain enough information to enable the motivated to track down the originals of these images. Indeed Whitfield's book looks dated in contrast. The theme of the book lends itself to a more focused analysis of issues around the particular uses of maps in public display and propaganda. Both do, however, provide useful reproductions of both well-known and unfamiliar maps.

Magnificent Maps examines large-scale maps that were designed for wall display. It is organized around the different locations in which such maps appear, from palace galleries and audience halls, to the more intimate spaces such as the cabinet or the bedchamber, to spaces beyond the palace such as government offices, merchant houses, and school rooms. Each section includes an introduction that outlines the probable purposes and range of examples to be found in such contexts, and is followed by detailed discussions of specific works. These are not limited to detachable, printed, or painted maps but also include globes and tapestries.

There are generous reproductions of the physical sites with which such maps were associated, such as the Viso del Marqués, Santa Cruz in Spain, the Vatican's Galleria della Carte Geografiche, and the wonderful incised marble globes on the floor of the Burgerzaal in Amsterdam. The range of types and uses for such maps is also varied. They include statements of power, of political ambition, reflections of scientific curiosity, or attempts to demonstrate such, as well as educational uses, and expressions of piety. They are used to plan wars or treated as state secrets. There are world maps, including a beautiful example of Fra Mauro's world map, maps of colonial

possessions such as the seventeenth-century Dutch maps of Brazil, maps of towns and cities produced as souvenirs, statements of civic pride, or for administrative uses. Also included are maps used to define ownership, such as Thomas Holme's *A Map of the Settled Part of Pennsylvania* (1687–88) or Francis Hill's *A map and description of all ye lands belonging to Richard Bridger Esqr in ye Parish of Worminghurst* (1707).

There is a fascinating chapter on the maps used to decorate Dutch homes that is of particular use for art historians looking at the work of painters such as Vermeer or de Hooch. One of the few books discussed is the enormous *Klencke Atlas* – the largest atlas in the world, standing at 176 cm – presented to Charles II of England by Amsterdam in 1660. Also included are a couple of contemporary maps by the British artists Grayson Perry and Stephen Watter. The latter produced a fascinatingly personal visual description of London in 2008. There are also images of maps being used, including the wonderful ballet dance with a balloon globe performed by Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator* (1940).

This is a book to be pored over, filled with insightful observations about the many functions maps perform and the impact these have on their display and design. The quality of the reproductions also lends these images to close perusal. Both books together provide a welcome reminder of the variety of maps that have been produced and their equally varied uses. They also reveal possible avenues for further research, while the wealth of images means that these are generous visual introductions to this fascinating field.

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Boaistuau, Pierre, *Histoires prodigieuses* (édition de 1561). *Edition critique*, intro. Stephen Bamforth, ed. Stephen Bamforth and Jean Céard, Geneva, Droz, 2010; paperback; pp. 968; 133 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. US\$120.00; ISBN 9782600013956.

French sixteenth-century humanist Pierre Boaistuau's best-known work is a printed compendium of wonders known as the *Histoires prodigieuses*. While the *Histoires prodigieuses* has appeared before in a modern edition, this is the first with full scholarly apparatus, and is the fruit of a collaborative effort by two eminent scholars of sixteenth-century French history and literature: Stephen Bamforth and Jean Céard. As well as being a thorough scholarly edition, this work breaks new ground in its assessment of the work's publication history and images, and of the religious affiliation of the author. Boaistuau's

most productive period coincided with the build-up of religious dissent in sixteenth-century France and the onset of the Wars of Religion. He died in 1566, and upon his death was completing a study of the ways in which the Catholic Church had been persecuted.

Yet this was not what it might at first appear, as research presented in this scholarly edition reveals. As Bamforth argues in his Introduction to this edition, Boaistuau was himself almost certainly a Protestant (his last book is concerned with early martyrs, not sixteenth-century Catholics), and his Protestantism has implications for understanding the production and content of the *Histoires prodigieuses*. Boaistuau's other major publications included translations of Marguerite de Navarre and Matteo Bandello, and his own 1558 *Theatre du monde*, a compilation of moralizing tales. The *Histoires prodigieuses*, however, was Boaistuau's most popular and widely circulated work.

First published in Paris in 1560, and appearing in a new edition of 1561 that forms the basis for this publication, the *Histoires prodigieuses* contains a series of 40 chapters that deal thematically with various wonders and disasters of the natural world. These include fires, floods, and earthquakes, as well as more esoteric topics such as prodigious feasts and extraordinary snakes. It belongs to a genre known as the wonder book; compendia which sought to collect and explain the bizarre phenomena of the natural world. Céard's *La nature et les prodiges* of 1977 (revised edition 1996), is the best study to date of this genre, particularly in France. Céard's contribution to this scholarly edition of Boaistuau consists primarily of extensive footnotes to the text, as well as an extended discussion of Boaistuau's intellectual context and debts; both aspects will be valuable to scholars of Boaistuau and of the intellectual culture of the sixteenth century.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of this project is Bamforth's well over 200-page Introduction. Alongside a close study of Boaistuau's life, and the details of how the *Histoires prodigieuses*' text and images were prepared, the Introduction includes an exceptionally thorough descriptive analysis of all known editions of the book, and it tracks how several rival publishers produced different editions. Bamforth has also identified and catalogued all the later, expanded volumes of the *Histoires prodigieuses* produced with new material by authors Claude Tesserant, François de Belleforest, Arnaud Sorbin, Rod Hoyer, and the today unknown 'I. D. M'. While the contents of these later books do not receive the same level of close attention, the bibliographical work found here provides a crucial foundation for further study.

This book will also complement Bamforth's sumptuous 2000 edition, with colour pictures and translation into English, of the 1559 manuscript of the *Histoires prodigieuses* presented to Elizabeth I, and held today in the

Wellcome Trust Library in London. In this new work, Bamforth provides a detailed analysis of the intersection of print and manuscript culture in the sixteenth century, and reveals how subtle differences and deletions of texts and images (such as an image of female nudity, as well as passages that too obviously reveal Boaistuau's Protestant sympathies), change across various formats.

As electronic copies of early modern books are more commonly available online, simple facsimiles of early books are increasingly redundant. Indeed, scholars working on Boaistuau will certainly access the range of sixteenth-century editions available electronically. This edition will play a crucial additional role in supplying a substantial scholarly analysis of the *Histoires prodigieuses* and more broadly making a contribution to the study of print culture, book history, intellectual history, and religious history, as well as studies in French literature. The index, bibliography, and glossary will also be useful to scholars working on related projects.

While the scholarship is impressive, and the commitment of the publisher to projects such as this is admirable, it is a shame that the work appears as a small paperback, as a hardback would be preferable for a reference work of this type. However, this is a minor criticism of what will become the standard introduction to the *Histoires prodigieuses* and is the best work to date on the life of Pierre Boaistuau.

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Burgess, Glyn S. and Leslie C. **Brook**, eds, *The Old French Lays of Ignaure, Oiselet and Amours* (Gallica), Woodbridge & Rochester, D. S. Brewer, 2010; hardback; pp. 286; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9781843842538.

This is the third work of collaboration between Glyn Burgess and Leslie Brook, who have already brought out two important editions of Old French lays. The work of editing, translating, and annotating a series of Old French lays and of providing comprehensive introductions to them is highly demanding: this collection of three lays represents an achievement that would be extremely difficult for a single scholar. Researching the sources and analogues for the story of the *coeur mangé* ('eaten heart') in *Ignaure*, for instance, is in itself a considerable undertaking, and this book includes two additional lays, *Oiselet* and *Amours*.

The authors continue the format of the series of Old French lays of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that they have been editing, translating, and

annotating since 1999. The three lays here are very loosely connected, having little in common. *Ignoure*, for instance, is narrative, but *Oiselet* and *Amours* are anecdotal. They share no literary purpose: *Oiselet* is didactic and *Ignoure* is parodic; *Amours* aspires to portray a courtly love but does not progress beyond a declaration of love. *Oiselet* and *Ignoure* do not reflect courtly values even to the extent that *Amours* does: *Oiselet* espouses an everyday pragmatism in the bird's proverbs, and *Ignoure* is far removed from a courtly ethos in its story of the protagonist's libertinism and the savage revenge wrought upon him by the twelve lords he has cuckolded.

None of these three lays can be considered to be a 'Breton' lay in origin, and Burgess and Brook refrain from using the term in this collection. Nevertheless, the genre began with attribution of the original lays to the Bretons and for some 50 years or so the Old French lays dealt primarily with Breton material. Only *Oiselet* here has any suggestion of magic or the Celtic Otherworld: the garden withers when the bird leaves it. The location of the lays is not discernibly Breton: the location of *Oiselet* is not specified, while *Amours* takes place in two adjoining countries that are not named. *Ignoure* is set around the castle of Riol, which Rita Lejeune has suggested could be Rieux (near Redon in Brittany); even if she is right the mention of location is purely perfunctory.

Without the collaboration of these two scholars these lays might well have been treated in separate monographs. What is gained by linking these disparate lays, one might ask? The answer that seems to emerge is that they illustrate the range in tone and content of the later Old French lays. 'As time passed', the authors state in their Introduction, 'the term "lai" was certainly used by writers and scribes in an increasingly loose fashion to designate a wide range of short narrative poems ... which had at least some connection with the world of the court and with the themes of love and chivalry' (p. 2). But even that description is too inclusive, for there are a number of Old French lays that are not narrative at all but merely anecdotal.

Burgess and Brook have devised a nearly identical structure for their discussion of these disparate lays, thereby imposing a basic unity upon their disparate material. That is why their book is such a successful collaboration. Each lay has its own Introduction in which the authors discuss, most importantly, the manuscripts and editions they have used, the author and date of the lay, the sources and analogues of each poem, the chief themes and characters, and the genre to which each poem most seems to belong. In these discussions of genre, here and in their two previous collections, the authors might well have left behind an unprofitable aspect of twentieth-century scholarship: an obsession with the issue of genre that failed to produce a clear

definition of it. That was not an aspect that preoccupied the Old French lay-writers themselves. Burgess and Brook describe the lays as a 'tolerant genre' and assert that 'If the author of a text calls his work a lay, then it is a lay' (p. 205), but they continue to raise the question whether or not a specific poem can justly call itself a lay. This inconsistency may be born of the authors' desire to accommodate each other's viewpoint in a constantly demanding work of close collaboration.

The authors are assured translators, using a contemporary idiom when it seems appropriate. Given the limited range of Old French adjectives and adverbs and the imprecision of the language's conjunctions compared with modern English, this is a sensible way of avoiding awkwardnesses. The line-by-line translations are admirably smooth.

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Campbell, Julie D. and Anne R. **Larsen**, eds, *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. 352; 18 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £65.00; ISBN 9780754667384.

This collection of eleven essays, with a foreword, afterword, and substantial introduction presents early modern women's writing from England, Scotland, France, Italy, and the Netherlands, from the early sixteenth to late seventeenth centuries. These essays represent a recent shift in literary historical studies of women's writing from a focus on the social and intellectual constraints experienced by female authors to the ways in which their writing was sustained and promoted by pan-European intellectual communities of men and women. The editors identify several historical elements which supported women's writing in this period: women's education within the 'learned family' and with this the cultural capital associated with educated women; salons and academies; the publication of anthologies of women's writing; and religious-political provocations as a catalyst for writing.

Diana Robin's foreword presents the key features of the literary culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which benefitted writers, and to which they contributed: the rediscovered classical heritage; the movement of books made possible by the new technology of print; and vernacular translations of canonical and new works. In her afterword, Margaret Ezell emphasizes the role of interdisciplinary scholarly networks working on women's writing in continuing to question and broaden the historical assumptions of early

modern women's lives that inform critical approaches to their writing. For example, many essays in this collection show the mobility of women and their texts across social, national, and linguistic borders, where earlier criticism may have taken for granted women's place within the home as emphasized in didactic literature of the period.

The body of the text is divided into three sections. Part I is entitled 'Continental Epistolary Communities', and contains three essays. Susan Broomhall writes on the Nassau family correspondence at the turn of the seventeenth century, with a focus on 'how gender inflected their epistolary negotiation of relationships and discourse with their correspondents' (p. 25). For the women especially, an important role of letters was the formation and maintenance of ideas of family identity across wide distances and political and religious divisions in the family. Meredith Ray finds in Arcangela Tarabotti's (1604–52) published letter collection evidence of her engagement with secular society and commerce contrary to the efforts of church authorities to enforce the enclosure of nuns. Tarabotti records her role as an intermediary in lace production, and her participation in the education of girls boarding at the convent and in marriage negotiations on behalf of young women who had completed their education. In her essay, Camilla Russell shows that the personal correspondence between Giulia Gonzaga (1513–66) and Pietro Carnasecchi (1508–67) was one of the means by which the network of the *Spirituali* was maintained after their beliefs were declared heretical in 1645. Gonzaga's gender and social status protected her from prosecution by the Inquisition, leaving her free to continue her religious leadership, but in 1566, the year after Gonzaga's death, Carnasecchi was convicted and executed for heresy on the basis of the letters' contents.

The theme of the five essays in Part II is 'Cross-channel textual communities and uses of print'. Leah Chang presents Parisian printer Jean de Marnef's publication of a female-authored poetry anthology as a 'gendered publication' in which gender is central 'for understanding the presentation and even the material production of the book' (p. 99). Chang argues that in this volume the female printer combines previously published poetry by Pernette du Guillet with ten anonymous poems to present a particularly female conception of desire, virtue, and *amité* (understood as mutual respect between spouses). Sharon Arnhault demonstrates that the prayers of Dorothy, Lady Pakington (1623–79), which circulated in manuscript and were used in household and family prayer, were a legitimate means of political and religious expression and influence in support of the Royalist cause. Susan Felch explores the influence of Anne Vaughan Lock (1530–after 1590) and her literary works on religious and political reformers in

Europe and Scotland. Sarah Ross discusses the self-fashioning of Esther Inglis (1571–1624) as an intellectual and artist who bridged the French and English humanist communities, and the complexity of her cultural production across media and languages. Martine Van Elk considers the textual relationships between a book of Christian emblems by Georgette de Montenay (1540–1607) which had a Dutch translation by Anna Roemers Visscher (1583–1651) and a scribal transcription by Esther Inglis, comparing the construction of female authorship by the three Calvinist women, and the ways in which the political contexts influenced the interpretation of the emblems across the texts.

The final section, ‘Constructions of Transnational Literary Circles’, contains three essays. Julie Campbell follows the movement of two humanist scholars, Nicholas Denisot (1515–59) who taught the Seymour sisters, Anne, Margaret, and Jane and Charles Utenove (1536–1600) who was tutor to the Morel family, Camille, Lucrèce, Diane, and Isaac. Both tutors circulated and promoted the poetry of their pupils in humanist circles throughout Europe, during and after their employment, which enhanced the reputation of the tutors and ensured the international renown of the women, illustrating that ‘the literary and linguistic gifts of learned women were considered rich sources of cultural capital during the sixteenth century’ (p. 227). Anne Larsen highlights a theoretical basis for her analysis of the ‘textual community of peers’ Catherine des Roche (1542–87) chose as her exemplars in two dialogues of her *Secondes oeuvres* (1583), in the form of Karen Burke Lefevre’s re-formulation of individual creativity as a collaborative process in *Invention as a Social Act* (1987). She demonstrates Roche’s use of canonical catalogues of learned women and men, and how her re-formulation of these exemplars ‘mirror[s] the dynamics, both literary and historical of the lives of the Des Roches team’ (p. 249). Carol Pal explores three interrelated examples of literary *familles d’alliance*: between Michele de Montaigne and Marie de Gournay; Gournay and Anna Maria van Schurman; Schurman and Marie du Moulain, the niece of André Rivet.

This volume is an important resource for scholars working on women’s writing and European intellectual networks of the early modern period.

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Cameron, Euan, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, & Religion, 1250–1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010; hardback; pp. 473; R.R.P US\$55.00; ISBN 978019925782.

The distinction between superstitious and religious practice is often blurry. What is perceived to be a deep religious ritual by one religion can be seen as nothing but a superstitious custom by another. What is regarded in one religion as engaging with God and the Angels can be perceived in another as communicating with Satan and the demons. The distinction seemed particularly clear at the time of the Reformation, but for the theological establishment it was true for the entire period between the medieval era and the Enlightenment, although not always clear in the minds of the common people. *Enchanted Europe* is a study of these differing perceptions.

From the beginning, Euan Cameron makes it clear what this book aims to address within the bounds of this study. It is an analysis of literature, concentrating on superstitions and the learned response to them. The arguments that are presented in the book are rooted in history, and not in anthropology, philosophy, or religious studies. Within this framework the study presents a fascinating overview of the ever-moving distinguishing line between superstitious and religious practice.

Cameron does not attempt to resolve the differences but he presents a scholarly synopsis of each period within the years 1250–1750. To this end, he divides the book into four parts. Part I is entitled ‘Discerning and Controlling Invisible Forces: the Image of Superstition in the Literature’. This section presents the image of the folkloric world between the mid-thirteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries. In a pre-scientific world, the ordinary people constructed the universe and their place in it through folklore, and mental or physical illnesses were treated by traditional ‘healing’ practices, customs, and sympathetic magic. Although Christian thinkers of this period challenged this body of popular knowledge and custom, to the local clergy and the ordinary people many of these practices became enmeshed into Christian religious culture, leaving the distinction between Christian and folklore practices difficult to discern.

Part II, ‘The Learned Response to Superstitions in the Middle Ages: Angels and Demons’, examines the demonological tradition in medieval ecclesiastical writing which raised the questions of human worship and the divine governance of the cosmos and, importantly, provided a defence of God’s goodness despite the existence of evil in the world. The theological establishment denounced popular superstitions or sympathetic magic – which was often practised by the ordinary people to protect them against

the evil of the world – as demonic. However, the clergy felt that demonizing the folklorized religion was too extreme and that many people would not see anything wrong with their practices.

Part III, ‘Superstitions in Controversy: Renaissance and Reformations’, reveals a time of dramatic change where attempts were made to persuade the people from their superstitious belief systems. During the Reformation, both the Protestant and Catholic hierarchy sought to encourage a uniform belief system and ritual practices that distinguished their religion from others. The result was that Protestant and Catholic parishioners accused each other of practising superstitious rites and beliefs that were possibly demonically motivated. Superstition was becoming something to fear. This fear often resulted in accusations and persecution of those suspected of witchcraft that instilled further fear.

Part IV, ‘The Cosmos Changes Shape: Superstition is Defined’, describes how, with the decline of religious absolutism during the Enlightenment, ‘superstition’ became a term used to describe a particular religious frame of mind rather than another religion. It extended to dogmatic militancy of all kinds, including the accuser’s own religion. However, the Enlightenment also saw the romanticization of some aspects of folklore, particularly the spirits, spells, and sympathetic magic.

Cameron does not attempt to write a comprehensive study of superstition, reason, and religion between the years 1250–1750; such a study would take many volumes. He does, however, present a study that captures the ambience of each era through the use of numerous interesting examples, and by comparing the writings of the theological establishment with the practices of the common people. Superstitious and religious practices reveal how people perceived their place in the cosmos and how they dealt with the problems that arose in their place. Cameron creates a highly readable narrative, supplemented with a comprehensive index and bibliography. *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, & Religion, 1250–1750* is a worthy addition to all university libraries.

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Crassons, Kate, *The Claims of Poverty: Literature, Culture, and Ideology in Late Medieval England*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2010; paperback; pp. 400; R.R.P. US\$40.00; ISBN 9780268023027.

Kate Crassons's debut text (derived from her Duke University dissertation) is a lively and original survey of medieval accounts and understandings of poverty from the 1300s to the fifteenth century. Fascinatingly, the book is also contemporary in its emphasis. Crassons leaps into this theme, asserting from the outset that the ambiguity in both defining and judging poverty is as salient to medieval England as it is to the twenty-first century. Crassons also engages directly with the charged meanings given to poverty and to the 'involuntary poor', both in the Middle Ages and in the present.

Although her text is based on the reading of texts from medieval England, she begins with some analysis of St Francis of Assisi. Doing so means she is from the outset acknowledging that how people judged the poor, and also how the poor behaved, was subject to shifts in meaning and emphasis. For example, Francis himself can be understood as both an elite man who 'exploited the poor to enhance his own social credit', and as a ground breaking figure in terms of advocacy of the poor (p. 4).

The ambiguity she finds in Francis of Assisi links to one of the main themes of this book, which is to account not only for the intricacies of attitudes to the poor, but also for a shift in cultural understandings in poverty which gradually transformed medieval literary accounts of poverty and its victims. According to Crassons, theological and cultural attitudes to poverty gradually became more hostile, as ideas on the virtues of poverty receded.

The book is also conspicuously multi-disciplinary. The core of the text is analysis of medieval literary texts. *Piers Plowman* receives the lion's share of attention; no other text is subject to such in-depth treatment and the chapter relating to it is thus the lengthiest. The book is also indebted to methodologies and insights from cultural studies and a number of other disciplines. One of these is economic history, for as Crassons acknowledges, poverty is as much economic as epistemological in the faces it presents to interpreters and scholars.

Within these frameworks, Crassons offers a nuanced and sophisticated epistemological analysis of how medieval writers conceived of poverty. She takes this analysis to the most precise level, assessing shifting understandings of the concepts 'need' and 'claim', finding in the latter term a word that can be understood as both a noun and a verb. By this, Crassons means that poverty made demands of society but also occupied different traditions within medieval literature.

Similarly, the complexity of understanding ‘need’ as a concept is explored through *Piers Plowman* (p. 22). For mendicants, poverty manifested spiritual perfection. Others contested this claim on both meaning and virtue, and Crassons charts the ongoing disputes between mendicants and anti-fraternalists, who disputed the very idea of poverty as comprising a religious practice. Her extensive analysis of *Piers Plowman* contributes to this analysis. Crassons finds in *Piers Plowman* that the poem expresses suspicion at the idea of poverty embodying perfection. Crassons exhibits the same willingness to assess complexity in meaning in the poem itself, such as Langland’s contrasting of ‘truly needy’ with the ‘unworthy poor’. The complexity which she insists on as informing Langland’s approach to poverty contrasts with earlier readings by scholars, who were more inclined to see Langland viewing poverty as informing spiritual perfection.

Passing from *Piers Plowman* itself, Crassons also examines the ‘Piers Plowman Tradition’, including a Wycliffite text *Pierce the Plougman’s Crede*. Crassons thus charts Langland’s suspicion of poverty into less orthodox territory, in the critical commentary that the *Crede* author offered on fraternal claims to perfection. Crassons explores the Wycliffite responses to poverty; attacks on fraternal perfection were concomitant with the use of the voices of the ‘pore’ to offer an affront to the Church.

Crassons insists that the themes of her book comprise ‘enduring cultural anxieties’ (p. 295). To substantiate her point, she concludes with an assessment of modern writings on poverty, in which she finds that medieval understandings of poverty remain salient in modern discourse. While much of Crassons’s book involves the recapitulation of familiar texts and familiar aspects of late-medieval England, this is an original survey and offers a strong reading of *Piers Plowman* in particular.

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Davis, Natalie Zemon and Denis Crouzet, *A Passion for History: Natalie Zemon Davis, Conversations with Denis Crouzet* (Early Modern Studies, 4), ed. Michael Wolfe, Kirksville, MO, Truman State University Press, 2010; paperback; pp. 232; R.R.P. US\$24.95; ISBN 9781931112970.

Seven years ago, Natalie Zemon Davis sat down with fellow historian Denis Crouzet to reflect on her life as a historian. The resulting *A Passion for History* is a highly personal reflection on Davis’s life as a Jewish-American girl, daughter, student, woman, academic, wife, mother, and teacher, who forged a personal and professional path for herself. A reviewer has no choice but to respond in

a similarly personal way. Indeed, as a doctoral hopeful currently combating thesis-related insecurities, reading this book helped revive my own passion for history.

Davis reflects on how her passion for history developed as a schoolgirl: 'I was fascinated by the simple facts of history, the things that people always complain about as boring. ... I enjoyed memorising them, [and] I liked the sense of mastery I got from being able to remember and use all that historical information' (p. 1). The fascination continued into her college and university years and she recalls the sense of 'wonderment' she felt when delving into the archives for the first time: I was reminded of the tingle of excitement I felt when the librarian placed the first volume of the sixteenth-century Hôtel-Dieu accounts in front of me. 'It wasn't the "perfume" of the archives themselves', Davis recalls, 'but it gave me a stronger sense for the past. I felt that I was coming to know Christine de Pizan, that I was having an encounter with Guillaume Budé' (p. 2).

Davis has continually reminded herself, over the years, to 'watch out' for 'this passion to know and to understand [that] is positive insofar as it encourages us to explore a mysterious world ... [but] it also brings a danger – that of being possessed by the illusion of greater familiarity with the past than one really has' (pp. 2–3). (A timely reminder for all historians!) Davis stresses how important it is to respect the 'mental universes of the past' and 'draw on situations, mentalities and reactions analogous or close to those one is trying to understand' when narrating the past. As she says, 'I want to be a storyteller, not a cannibal' (pp. 122, 5–6).

Over the years, Davis's passion was drawn toward the lives of women and the *menu peuple*. Her research was focused by her 'mission', which is 'to save or preserve people – women and men – from obscurity, from the hidden, and give some dignity or sense to their lives, even when they end tragically' (p. 118). She expresses her disappointment with historians who have 'reductionist and naïve' attitudes, 'who are always suspicious of everything one tries to do to discover the voice of the *menu peuple*', and explains her sense of responsibility for those 'persons from a modest background or from an illiterate milieu [who] have no means to leave traces of themselves'. 'It's the others who need me,' she explains (pp. 32–34). This brought to my mind comments made some years ago about the detrimental effect female historians – with their partiality for unimportant *feminine* topics such as social history and the history of women – have had on the discipline of history. Certainly, Davis's own body of work gives the lie to the idea that the discipline of history is best served by male historians, who focus on the more palatable and *masculine* topics of politics and the manly pursuits of great men.

Davis's acclaimed and prize-winning published works demonstrate a diversity of subject matter, issues, and themes, ranging from the journeymen printers of sixteenth-century Lyon, to the lives and writings of early modern women. In her career as a teacher and collaborator with her male and female colleagues, she has demonstrated a similar diversity of interests. Davis recalls that her passion for history was ignited by the traditional topics of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and the English and French Revolutions, over the course of which, she recalls, 'we did not talk about women' (p. 109).

The subject of her senior thesis was the radical Renaissance philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi and her first published works during her student years were on the *unfeminine* topics of 'The Protestant Printing Works of Lyon in 1514' and 'The 1592 Edition of Estienne's "Apologie pour Hérodote"' (p. 187). In those early years, Davis reflects: 'What was essential for me ... was that I had a woman as a professor' (p. 109).

It was not until she began her tenure at the University of Toronto that she turned to the history of women, in collaboration with her colleagues Jill Ker Conway, Louise Tilly, Alison Prentice, and Germaine Warkentin. Her other academic influences reads like a *Who's Who* of twentieth-century academia and includes noted male *and* female historians, Marc Bloch, Émile Coornaert, Georges Duby, Pierre Goubert, Christine Klapisch-Zuber, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Nancy Roelker, Max Weber, and Françoise Weil, as well as academics from the disciplines of anthropology and literature. It is clear that either through the 'privilege' of collaboration or as a student of their work, Davis's passion for history and approach to her craft has been influenced by the *doyens* and *doyennes* of the discipline and explains why her work has been much lauded, admired, and enjoyed.

To conclude with Davis's own words: 'history reveals the possibilities of the past – admirable, troubling, irritating, astonishing – and as such, they encourage us to think of the possibilities in the present and future. For me, the possibilities of the past invite a commitment to humanity and offer a ray of hope for the future'.

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Dimmock, Matthew and Andrew **Hadfield**, eds, *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009; paperback; pp. xi, 219; R.R.P. £55.00, ISBN 9780754665809.

This volume – a collection of papers read at the international conference ‘Popular Culture and the Early Modern World’ held at the University of Sussex in 2007 – invests a lot of effort into blurring the traditional demarcation between the adjective ‘popular’ and the noun ‘culture’. More precisely, it attempts to place the ‘popular’ component, commonly seen as deriving from a sociological stratification of cultural production, closer to what might be perceived as the elite territory of cultural perception. The collection gets its best characterization from Sue Wiseman’s opening essay in which she invites readers to distance themselves from ‘the loose idea or habit of mind of casually imagining the popular as a sphere or place’, and instead understand it as an ever-changing entity, which can accommodate rich, and sometimes contradicting, connotations (p. 26). The subsequent essays follow this agenda, while making apparent the shared concern with defining popular culture not as a unitary terrain, but rather as one that begs constant renegotiations.

Neil Rhodes’s contribution, an exercise in multidisciplinary cross-reading, is one such renegotiation. It offers a re-interpretation of Elizabethan poet and pamphleteer, Thomas Nashe’s style from the perspective of mid-twentieth century theories of mass-transmitted culture. Rhodes notes that ‘Nashe’s negotiations between elite and popular cultures are reflected in his agile interweaving of features from oral and print media’ (p. 33). In Rhodes’s view, this is an effect of the instability that characterizes Nashe when it comes to his identification with one or another of the elements implied by the elite-versus-popular dichotomy.

In her essay, Michelle O’Callaghan performs a similar critical reading of a product of early modern popular culture, focusing on Thomas Taylor, the so-called ‘sculler poet’, who had the exceptional ability (like Nashe) to ‘move between the worlds of the labouring-classes and the court’ (p. 45). O’Callaghan concludes that ‘Taylor does have a clear sense of the distinctions between learned and unlearned cultures’, but ‘these bipolar categories are not so fixed that they cannot be recalibrated in order to privilege the labouring poet over the learned wit’ (p. 56).

Part I ends with ‘What is a Chapbook?’ by Lori Humphrey Newcomb, who argues that both ‘popular culture’ and ‘chapbook’ are ‘elite analytical phrases that refer to cultural leftovers’, and reads the two accordingly (p. 58). With its widespread circulation, the early modern chapbook is said to have travelled ‘through social and geographic space, generally attracting no

attention' (p. 70). Newcomb points out that chapbooks 'went where print could not otherwise go'. This is perhaps the most important aspect that ties it to the discourse of popular culture, which rests not so much on the social class of its audience, but rather on the broad circulation and significant affordability of its products (p. 71).

The second part of the book fleshes out the concept of popular culture in a variety of genres, firstly in Linda Hutjens's essay with its emphasis on the tradition of tales about incognito monarchs. The author identifies the 'communal cultural source' of this tradition in 'the Judeo-Christian tradition as a formative element in popular culture' (p. 87).

Ian Frederick Moulton's "Popu-love" starts from the observation that both popular culture and sex tend to be defined as 'low', either from the perspective of the social origins of their audiences (the former) or that of 'the lower body and base desires' (the latter) (p. 91). Elisabeth Salter's and Femke Molekamp's contributions both deal with religious subjects. The former bases its argument on the close reading of the marginalia of John Day's *Booke of Christian Prayers*, in an attempt to provide material evidence for the 'rupture between medieval Catholicism and the post-medieval Protestantism' (p. 107). The latter generates a discussion about the Bible as both text and object, with a particular emphasis on its circulation in the field of domesticity. The article contains an interesting section on the art of decorating Bibles: certainly a form of early-modern popular culture.

Abigail Shinn enunciates several 'publishing tropes' that made the printing of almanacs a lucrative business: especially the use of recognizable format and continuity of design. She applies these tropes to Spenser's *Calendar* to prove that by alluding to such forms of popular culture Spenser was making his work recognizable to an audience highly sensitive to popular genres. 'The increased circulation of cheap, mass-produced almanacs and prognostications' (p. 154) is also the topic of Nandini Das's essay, which deals with humanist scholarship and popular print in Renaissance England.

Thomas Healy's 'Elizabeth I at Tilbury and Popular Culture' considers two ballad responses to the speech delivered in August 1588. These texts are important because they allow the reading of Shakespeare's *Henry V* from the perspective of textual parallelism: 'Henry's speech before Agincourt reflects issues raised by Elizabeth's Tilbury speech' (p. 175). Shakespeare features again in Mary Ellen Lamb's essay which reads Shakespeare's *Macbeth* through the filter of several popular genres.

Sermons delivered in the wake of the 1625 plague form the subject of the last essay in the collection. Through the analysis of a number of texts Kevin Killeen concludes that 'thanksgiving sermons offered the opportunity

both to chastise the city and the individual for their lack of charity, and to re-orientate priorities in the reconstruction of urban life' (p. 196).

The rich agenda of the present volume is thus made apparent by the many subjects and materials examined. Each of the authors has convincingly illustrated a different way in which the aristocratic and the plebeian worked together. The result is an intricate picture of the early modern popular culture as recorded in English sources throughout the seventeenth century. At least from this perspective, the book is a significant scholarly success, an interpretive exercise worth considering.

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Dionne, Craig and **Parmita Kapadia**, eds, *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008; hardback; pp. ix, 247; 8 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754662969.

This is an excellent collection of twelve essays, plus introduction and afterword. It is stimulating, erudite, and very readable. Most importantly it has coherence and the links between the essays make this a very useful and worthwhile collection.

Part of the coherence comes from the fact that there is clearly a shared body of theoretical knowledge behind many of the papers. Key writers in the field of postcolonialism, such as Ania Loomba, Martin Orkin, and Jyotsna G. Singh (who also provides the afterword) are referenced, along with Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, and they provide key concepts that inform many of the individual essays. Furthermore, some of the essays cross-reference the work of 'co-contributors' in relation to useful concepts such as Jonathan Dollimore's concept of 'creative vandalism' (p. 59).

The premise of the collection is a familiar one, that 'Shakespeare has been an inexhaustible source' (p. 213) for all sorts of writers, performers, and producers since the 1623 First Folio, as Atef Laouyene says, and there have been all sorts of collections that trace and count the ways that he has been appropriated, reproduced, and transformed. What differentiates this collection includes the accessibility of the material and the kinds of discussion that occur within its pages. Tracking and analysing versions of Shakespeare from Cuba to South Africa to Australia has certain inherent difficulties in that very few readers are likely to have seen or have access to all, or even a majority of the productions or performances being discussed. Even if the plays are on film or digitized they are not necessarily likely to be globally

available. The problem is exacerbated if the discussion is of local, short-term productions.

Here, however, most essays manage to provide local and specific detail within a more generally informative and informed context, so that even if a reader has not seen or had access to a particular production there is enough information and context to provide food for thought, and Singh is right to describe this as 'a richly rewarding journey' (p. 239).

The collection also celebrates and employs a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches without forgetting what the endpoint is, and the authors are at pains to reprise complex technical terms such as Gérard Genette's 'heterodiagetic appropriations' in ways that are helpful and explanatory.

It is also a consistently high-value volume in that, to my mind, each essay clearly deserves its pages in the volume. Whether it is Thomas Cartelli talking about Shakespeare and James Joyce, Santiago Rodriguez Guerrero-Strachan and Ana Sáez Hidalgo on Salman Rushdie and Hamlet, or Maureen McDonnell on 'privileging an aboriginal presence' in a Sydney Company B production of *As You Like It*, each essay is worthy of its spot.

Craig Dionne's own essay on Carriacou's Shakespeare Mas is a fascinating investigation of how the West Indian island's children being taught English from previous centuries' textbooks of Shakespearian quotations, has led to a carnivalesque ritual of verbal duels, involving 'matches between men of different villages' competing to outdo each other in 'memorization and oral performance' (p. 37), and takes the form of a 'textual grafting' (p. 48) that challenges the notion of Shakespearian universality through making the words 'speak in an open circuit of reference to the individual's own worldly concerns' (p. 49).

Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo also successfully employ Bhabha's concept of a Third Space 'in which cultural expressions are neither metropolitan nor colonial but a product of the translation of dominant elements by the colonized subject' (p. 74) to suggest how rich the notion of hybridization can be in these contexts of indigenous appropriations.

Perhaps, as a criticism, there could have been more discussion of what 'indigenous' means, given that in specific local contexts it can be a contested topic. Perhaps, too, there could have been further debate about why Shakespeare's work seems so generally malleable. In general, though, this is a fine collection indeed, and one where, as the editors Dionne and Kapadia suggest, the author 'seizes upon a voice or grain of the text and brings it to light' (p. 10).

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Donavin, Georgiana and Anita **Obermeier**, eds, *Romance and Rhetoric: Essays in Honour of Dhira B. Mahoney*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; hardback; pp. viii, 281; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503531496.

This volume honours Professor Dhira B. Mahoney who recently retired from the University of Arizona and is well known for her rhetorical readings of late medieval literature. The volume is divided into four sections: Prologues and Pictures; Women and Rhetoric; Lyric, Song and Audience; and Arthurian Literature: Composition and Production. Each section represents a particular interest of Mahoney's and offers the reader a rich and diverse range of texts and readings. The range of texts covers Middle English, Latin, French, and German and authors such as Chaucer, Lydgate, Malory, Christine de Pisan, and Chretien de Troyes. What ties all these texts and authors together is that the essays presented in this volume are a response to Mahoney's scholarship. The opening chapter, a tribute to Mahoney, discusses how each section of the volume relates to her academic interests and scholarship.

The first two sections are primarily concerned with what rhetorical devices within texts can tell the reader about those who constructed them. The first section contains three essays that examine this question. Ann Dobyn's 'Exemplars of Chivalry and Ethics in Middle English Romance' considers the prologues to three romances in the Thornton Manuscript to investigate how similar ethical concerns tie the romances together. The second essay, 'Jan der Enikel's Prologue as a Guide to Textual Multiplicity' by Maria Dobozy, turns from romance to the German chronicle tradition to examine how a text's reception can influence the way various prologues are constructed. The final essay in this section, 'Gifts and Givers that Keep on Giving: Pictured Presentations in Early Medieval Manuscripts' by Corine Schleif, studies visual representations of books being given to patrons to understand how the makers of texts wished to be seen by their audiences.

The second section turns to issues of gender and authorship. The first essay, 'The Light of the Virgin Muse in John Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*' by Georgiana Donavin, looks at the description of light in Lydgate's *Life of our Lady*. Light becomes a motif that persuades readers 'to envision the Virgin in the meditations' (p. 81) as Lydgate positions himself as an advocate of the Virgin. The following essay, 'Sisters under the Skin: Margery Kempe and Christine de Pisan' by Elizabeth Archibald, looks at the similarities between these two authors and the manner in which they constructed themselves as 'self-fashioned autobiographers' (p. 107) within their texts. The last essay in this section, 'Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Margery Kempe as Underground Preacher' by Rosalynn Voaden, looks at how Margery Kempe constructed

herself as a woman who lived her life according to what Christ had willed for her (p. 121). Voaden argues that Kempe was not a woman driven by spiritual anxiety, but rather that her preaching was a conscious undertaking in obedience to Christ.

The third section, Lyric, Song and Audience, is concerned with different rhetorical devices found in texts. Phyllis R. Brown's essay 'Rhetoric and Reception: Guillaume de Machaut's "Je Maudi"' discusses how the use of a curse in love poetry still affirms the power of love while drawing attention to human ridiculousness (p. 146). Christine Francis looks at how Chaucer uses music to define his characters in "'Maken Melodye": The Quality of Song in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales'. And finally John Damon examines the antiphon *Estote fortes in bello* as a means of legitimizing violence by Christians against those seen as heretics, such as the Lollards, in a wide range of texts.

The final section of the volume turns to Arthurian literature, which is the area of literature for which Professor Mahoney is best known, particularly her work on the Grail legend. There are four essays in the section and the first two discuss the Grail. Anita Obermeier discusses images of fertility and sterility in medieval versions of the Grail legend. The second essay by Kevin J. Harty looks at Arnold Fanck's 1926 film, *Der Heilige Berg*, and discusses how the Grail became associated with Nazi ideology. The final two essays concentrate on Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Judith Lanzendorfer looks at folklore motifs and diminishing narrative time in Malory, while Alan Lupack discusses how Malory's use of prophesy, proverbs, letters, and inscriptions add authority to Malory's version of the Arthurian Legend.

This is an interesting and diverse collection of essays highlighting Professor Mahoney's contribution to the study of medieval literature. It will be of interest to researchers and students who are looking for new readings of the various texts. All the essays are well written and their arguments are easy to follow. In particular, this volume has much to offer anyone studying or researching medieval romances.

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Field, Rosalind, Phillipa **Hardman**, and Michelle **Sweeney**, eds, *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England* (Christianity and Culture: Issues in Teaching/Research), Woodbridge and Rochester, D. S. Brewer, 2010; hardback; pp. xxi, 204; R.R.P. £50.00; ISBN 9781843842194.

D. S. Brewer's relatively new series, 'Christianity and Culture: Issues in Teaching/Research', under general editors Dee Dyas and Helen Phillips, presents collections of new essays by prominent scholars that explore the role of religion in various aspects of culture in the past. The contributions offer a broad coverage of the major subjects in a particular area or period, and aim to provide teachers and researchers with the best new and current scholarship on the subject. The series is published in association with the Christianity and Culture project, which aims at exploring how past religious cultures can be studied and taught nowadays.

A particular feature of the series is that the essays present and discuss issues directly related to the teaching of the material, and a lot of effort has been put into suggesting resources for teaching each subject, in this case the Christian context of English romance. The final two essays in this collection specifically discuss practical aspects of pedagogy in this challenging field.

This volume attempts to re-examine the relationship between Christianity and romance, a key genre of the Middle Ages. Understandably, the essays here are not meant to reach a unanimous agreement or to come up with a single view of a complex situation. However, each of them aims – pertaining to its specific field of study – to present the reader with an up-to-date discussion of the current state of knowledge and the contemporary insights into medieval insular romance. The stress is put on the opportunities for interpreting the romances while reading them in their Christian cultural context. To this end, it 'may mean steering readers from a modern back-formation of piety and allegory where none exists, as well as providing a reliable and well-informed sense of the knowledge and cultural capital represented by Christianity for the original writers and audiences of romance' (p. x).

The patron and dedicatee of the volume, Derek Brewer, was an advocate of the Christianity and Culture project from its onset and he would always eagerly offer his advice. His essay, 'Romance Traditions and Christian Values in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', included in this collection, was still being written at the time of his death and unfortunately he did not finish it. His approach here is that modern preconceptions prevent us from reading *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the terms that its contemporary audience would have taken for granted: 'that our hermeneutic of suspicion makes us find difficulties in the wrong places and for the wrong reasons' (p. xxi). Of all

the essays in this volume, this one takes medieval Christianity seriously, i.e. it is treated here as an ethic to go by rather than a matter of doctrine or of historical practice, although these two aspects are duly considered.

It is worthwhile, to get a sense of its coverage, to quote the titles of all the main contributions in this valuable volume. The volume is divided into four sections: 'Christianity and the matters of romance'; 'Issues and debates' 'Reading romances'; and 'Teaching romance' and each section contains three essays, apart from the final one, which has two. The list of essays is as follows: 'Medieval Classical Romances: The Perils of Inheritance' (Helen Phillips); 'Celticity and Christianity in Medieval Romance' (Stephen Knight); 'Crusading, Chivalry and the Saracen World in Insular Romance' (Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes); 'How Christian is Chivalry?' (Raluca L. Radulescu); 'Magic and Christianity' (Corinne Saunders); 'Subverting, Containing and Upholding Christianity in Medieval Romance' (K. S. Whetter); 'Female Saints and Romance Heroines: Feminine Fiction and Faith among the Literate Elite' (Andrea Hopkins); '*Athelston* or the Middle English *Nativity of St Edmund*' (Rosalind Field); as well as the above-mentioned essay by Derek Brewer. The two final essays pertaining to the aspects of teaching are 'Questioning *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: Teaching the Text through its Medieval English Christian Context' (Michelle Sweeney), and 'Teaching Malory: A Subject-Centred Approach' (D. Thomas Hanks).

To sum up, the editors Rosalind Field, Phillipa Hardman, and Michelle Sweeney have compiled a truly outstanding collection of essays on romance and Christianity that offers many new and valuable insights into this relatively narrow field.

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Goddard, Richard, John **Langdon**, and Miriam **Müller**, eds, *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Christopher Dyer* (The Medieval Countryside, 4), Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; hardback; pp. viii, 307; 1 b/w tables, 1 b/w line art; R.R.P. €70.00; ISBN 9782503528151.

This volume of essays successfully fulfils the editors' intention that it be 'a well-earned tribute for an academic career with a tremendous influence on medieval social and economic history' (p. 1). An introduction by the editors honours the 'polymath' Christopher Dyer and introduces the collection's themes.

Grenville Astill's chapter ranges across the medieval countryside. This multidisciplinary review assesses long- and short-term patterns of settlement and exchange, ultimately concluding that 'a long chronology for rural change' still appears to hold, but that this was 'punctured with periods of acceleration and stasis that could vary' by region (p. 28). Continuing a focus on landscape, the late Harold Fox's chapter is one of the most remarkable in the volume. Included in the volume after having been discovered in draft form after the author's death, this is an account of the economics of moorlands and manors in the south-west of England. Richard Britnell's chapter on 'Postans's Fifteenth Century' (p. 49), is a call 'to abandon battles between optimism and pessimism' (p. 66) about the English national economy in that century and serves as a good historiographical review.

Richard Goddard provides a study of the relationships between local courts and the late medieval economy. Particularly interesting are discernible levels of small business debt. Although admittedly 'impressionistic' (p. 79) due to the dearth of source material to support firm quantitative analysis, this chapter seems particularly pertinent to the theme of the volume and certainly advances our appreciation of the role of chains of credit in the late medieval business economy. Robert Swanson's fascinating study of spiritual revenues of three parishes in Derbyshire complements the previous chapter by focusing on another area of neglected study. Swanson develops a picture of the wider role of spiritual revenues within a locality with interesting characters such as 'a cabal among the farmers' illustrative of 'complex relationships between those entitled to collect and those obligated to pay' (p. 103).

Several of the essays engage directly with Dyer's scholarship, and John Langdon's paper on building wages is a case in point. This addresses some of the finer details of wage history, drawing attention to the role of labour-supply as a wage-determinant, to regional factors, and to alternative labourers than those usually considered such as women and children. James Masschaele's study of itinerant royal courts also builds on one of Dyer's more prominent themes: the relationships between urban and rural medieval England. Masschaele's conclusion that itinerant courts were important as 'vehicles for the delivery of jury verdicts' (p. 135), which in turn drew people to town, is one of those historical arguments so simple as to be obvious, once it has been pointed out as clearly as this.

Phillip R. Schofield's study of trespass litigation in the manor court will be of interest to historians of the law. It is a detailed study on the trespass action, concluding that the form of action in the manor courts tended to lag a little behind that in the royal courts. The focus on law continues with Matthew Tompkins's analysis of a three-century lease, held collectively at

Great Horwood, where ‘sheep ate lords’ (p. 163). Chris Briggs provides ‘an illustration of Dyer’s arguments concerning the power of the peasant elite’ (p. 194) in a survey of demesne managers, through looking at presentments of lords’ officials. Briggs’s finding that resident reeves were less likely to be presented than salaried officials is certainly telling of peasant solidarity. Jean Birrell notes how the election of the reeve proved to be a means of ‘raising cash’ (p. 199) at the manor of Alrewas, and explores tensions over heriot (death duty) through a study of a custumal surviving in a manorial survey. Birrell situates this document within a discussion about lordship, tenancy, and attitudes towards both.

The volume closes with chapters of disorder. Jane Laughton puts the knife into any thought of ‘Merrie England’ with a study of fifteenth-century Chester that highlights a great deal of urban disorder. Miriam Müller charts changes in peasant consumption and the reactionary eating of exotica on the part of their betters. Bas J. P. van Bavel provides an interesting case study of lesser-known revolts, and points to their primary characteristics as being defensive and regional. Similarly, in the concluding essay of the volume, Samuel K. Cohn, Jr reiterates that scholars have focused more on large revolts, and then in turn he demolishes five widely held beliefs about pre-industrial revolts in general. Appropriately for a concluding essay, this posits a new research agenda based on this revision.

This is an excellent tribute volume. A diverse range of subjects, sources, chronologies, and methodologies are addressed within the themes of survival, discord, and the scholarly output of Christopher Dyer himself.

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Habib, Imtiaz, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500–1677: Imprints of the Invisible*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008; hardback; pp. xvi, 415; 6 b/w illustrations, 11 tables; R.R.P. US \$99.00, £60.00; ISBN 978075465695.

In *Black Lives in the English Archives*, Imtiaz Habib turns to a wide range of those archives in order to recover, as the ‘Introduction’ puts it, ‘The Missing (Black) Subject’. His book is a detailed and sophisticated study that makes a significant contribution towards filling the yawning gap in our knowledge, a gap that apparently we did not know was there. In the ‘Introduction’, Habib draws attention to many missed scholarly opportunities in the course of his survey of historical and literary-critical trends. He reflects on the ways in which these trends have produced an erroneous perception of ‘absence’.

At the core of this book, Habib has compiled a richly informative ‘Chronological Index of Records of Black People, 1500–1677’, printed as, in effect, Part II of his study. The Index comprises 448 items arranged by year, with transcriptions, details of the documentary source and notes. This alone gives the lie to persistent claims that early modern England was ‘race-innocent’ (p. 9). Habib attributes the tenacity of such a view not only to the political and legal ‘invisibility’ of black people ‘who remain, like animals, an un-legalized entity’ (p. 6, n. 16) in the period under investigation, but also to the contingencies of archival practices and the triumph of ‘theory in a poststructuralist age’ (p. 9). In the ‘Introduction’, Habib develops a reflexive cross-disciplinary account of the conditions of possibility for archival evidence that might constitute ‘imprints of the invisible’.

By scouring, for example, royal household accounts, estate records, parish church archives in and outside London, and a wide range of ‘legal, taxation, medical and civic archives’, Habib recovers evidence of ‘the varied impress of black working lives’ (p. 3). The first part of the book is a multidisciplinary narrative exposition of the historical material, drawing out the significance of particular items from the index. There are five chapters. Chapter 1, ‘Early Tudor Black Records: The Mixed Beginnings of a Black Population’; Chapter 2, ‘Elizabethan London Black Records: The Writing of Absence’; Chapter 3, ‘Black Records of Seventeenth-Century London: A Benign Neglect and the Legislation of Enslavement’; Chapter 4, ‘Black People Outside London, 1558–1677: The Provincial Backdrop’; Chapter 5, ‘Indians and Others: The Postcolonial Dream’. This chapter has previously been published in the *Journal of Narrative Theory* (36.1 (2006), 1-13), as ‘Indians in Shakespeare’s England as “the first-Fruits of India”: Colonial Effacement and Postcolonial Reinscription’.

An ‘Afterword’ provides a statistical analysis of the ‘black archives’ and an assessment of the importance of the patterns this analysis reveals. Throughout, Habib is careful to underline the ‘symptomatic’ nature of his data, reminding the reader that ‘actual numbers’ of black people in early modern England ‘are liable to be much higher’ (p. 261). There are eleven tables in this section; Habib’s discussion of them in the first two parts of it is nuanced, despite the relative brevity of the chapter. However, this brevity also contributes to a radically compressed style in the third, final part, plunging the reader into a dense assembly of theoretical concepts relevant to thinking about the ‘racialized subject’ (pp. 270–72). In light of the importance of understanding ‘what makes coherent the synchronicity and interdependence of the genesis of racism and colonialism in the history of modern Europe’ (p. 271), it is disappointing that the discussion must gesture at, rather than elaborate on

the relevance of his historical study to current debates. This is particularly evident when considering Habib's diverse cast of theorists: Zizek, Agamben, Deleuze and Guattari, Althusser, Balibar, Hardt and Negri, De Certeau, as well as Stallybrass, and White, all get a mention in less than three pages (including the notes).

Similarly disappointing are some of the reproductions that illustrate the text. A case in point is the potentially interesting Figure 6.1, 'A partial representation of locations of black people in London between 1500 and 1677, as indicated by documentary citations'. Unfortunately, the reproduction of Frans Hogenberg's map, '*Londinum Feracissimi Angliae Regni Metropolis*', is very small and lacks tonal contrast. This renders practically indistinguishable the symbols that aim to represent early Tudor, Elizabethan, and seventeenth-century citations (p. 268). 'Muddiness' generally characterizes the images. Another relatively minor concern is the number of typographical errors throughout the text. Ultimately these quibbles will not detract significantly from the importance of Imtiaz Habib's contribution to advancing historical understandings of race and colonialism in early modern England.

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Hannay, Margaret P., *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010; hardback; pp. xxxvii, 363; 28 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754660538.

Mary Wroth is the most remarkable of all the early modern women writers who have been gradually returning to view after centuries of neglect. She is now part of the early modern canon, and Margaret P. Hannay's scholarly biography is the final publishing event that confirms canonical status. It follows the editorial labours of the late Josephine Roberts, who published an edition of Wroth's poems in 1983, and an edition of Wroth's massive prose romance *Urania* in 1995 (Part I) and 1999 (Part II). Hannay's critical biography both confirms Wroth's importance and also adds to our growing knowledge of the Sidney family: Wroth was the niece of Philip and Mary Sidney (Hannay has also written the definitive biography of Mary).

The biography of Wroth is wide-ranging and includes a valuable quantity of information about Wroth's family – not just on her father's famous Sidney side, but also on her mother Barbara Gamage's side, which becomes important given that her mother's connections were more powerful than the Sidneys, even if less distinguished. Hannay's meticulous research underlines the fact

that, while Wroth stressed her Sidney heritage, especially within her literary endeavours, the ‘cultured and literate Welsh family’ (p. 6) on her mother’s side must have had a significant effect on Wroth’s sense of importance.

This is a literary biography and Hannay reads Wroth through her writing, and her writing through her sense of Wroth’s life. Any biography of Wroth has to be rather lopsided, as we have a reasonable amount of information about the first thirty years of her life, but very little direct information about the last thirty. Hannay makes judicious use of what information she has been able to glean, and much of the time this richly detailed book has to rely on contextualizing Wroth, with a certain amount of speculation about what she may have been doing or thinking. While grounding biography on many ‘ifs’ and ‘maybes’ is potentially problematic, Hannay is always conscious of where speculation begins and ends, and her detailed knowledge of the Sidney family and the general literary and historical context is put to good use. There are some wonderful glimpses of Wroth as a child, thanks to the extensive correspondence between her father and his secretary Rowland Whyte, which Hannay has previously edited along with Michael Brennan and Noel Kinnamon (a resourceful team who have brought primary Sidney material to a wide scholarly audience).

Hannay pays due attention to Wroth’s marriage to Robert Wroth, an unhappy event famously described by Ben Jonson: ‘My Lady Wroth ... is unworthily married on a jealous husband’. Wroth’s marriage and her affair with her cousin William Herbert, with whom she had two illegitimate children, are worthy of Hannay’s attention not merely as titillating facts in a fascinating life, but because Wroth’s feelings about marriage, thwarted love, and female desire are present in so much of her writing, especially in her poetry and in some of the semi-autobiographical passages in *Urania*. Hannay judiciously notes that negotiations for the marriage probably began when Mary was only thirteen and therefore unlikely to offer much resistance even if the match was unappealing. Hannay also balances the generally negative portrait of Robert Wroth with a caution against seeing him as simply jealous and boorish, even in his shadowed representations within *Urania*.

This is an excellent example of how Hannay always approaches Wroth’s writing with a sophisticated notion of how it might be illuminated by biographical information, but never dominated by it. Hannay is also able to provide a wealth of information about the activities of those closest to Wroth, particularly her aunt Mary Sidney, and her close friend Susan Herbert, Countess of Montgomery, the dedicatee of *Urania*, who was married to Philip Herbert.

Hannay provides a detailed account of the now quite famous story of Wroth's publication of *Urania* in 1621 and the subsequent controversy over its depiction of some recognisable Jacobean scandals. All of Wroth's writing is placed within a clear social, political and familial context, and some puzzles (such as the date of the Penshurst manuscript of *Love's Victory*) are solved. While the later stages of Wroth's life remain obscure, Hannay has, through dint of some excellent scholarly detective work, been able to trace the lives of Wroth's two illegitimate children, Katherine and William, in some detail, including some fascinating information about Katherine's two marriages and her two children from her second marriage.

This biography will not only provide new and fascinating information for scholars already familiar with Wroth's work, it is also a fine introduction for those less familiar with her life and extensive oeuvre. Ashgate has provided Hannay with excellent production values and the book is well illustrated (alas, not in colour), and seems to be error free.

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Jansen, Katherine L. and Miri **Rubin**, eds, *Charisma and Religious Authority: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Preaching, 1200–1500* (Europa Sacra, 4), Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; hardback; pp. xi, 260; 5 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503528595.

This collection of essays is the outcome of a British Academy International Collaboration Grant to editors Katherine Jansen and Miri Rubin that enabled them to host a colloquium and conference that brought together scholars who study Christian, Islamic, and Jewish preaching. Not unexpectedly, but regrettably, the majority of the essays are on Christian preaching. The sermon has been used by most of the major religious groups as an important form of instruction. Teaching manuals and collections of the works of effective and influential preachers were prized by religious leaders and formed a valuable part of religious libraries. Historians in the last few decades have increasingly turned to them for material to illuminate past cultures and mental landscapes.

This volume is less concerned with the specific content of the material than with evidence for the process through which the ideas were expounded and the reasons why the listeners took them to heart. The authors all consider Max Weber's definition of the word 'charisma' as relating to the divine inspiration of leadership and the belief of the followers in the leader's gifts. Weber's anthropological theory analysing the legitimization of political

authority underlies the approach taken in most of the papers. The essays all therefore to a greater or lesser degree focus on the relationship between religious and political authority.

Individual essays provide diverse insights into aspects of the process of preaching in the different traditions and the different genres. Considerable attention is devoted to the physical setting in which the sermon is performed – the positioning of the pulpit, the use of open space, the creation of sacred space, and the role of public processions as well as the formal aspects of the presentation, the required movements that gave it legitimacy, the gestures, body language, and intonation that gave it authority, and the use of the vernacular. Three of the papers also examine the way in which, exceptionally, women might be involved in preaching.

The manner in which the audience responded, which is harder to demonstrate, is also the subject of investigation. Most interesting is the essay by Jonathan Berkey on the complex and ambiguous relationship between religious and political authority in Islam. Otherwise though, there is surprisingly little on the tension between the authority of the preacher and the political power of the ruler, except in Christopher Fletcher's stimulating account of the 'Good' Parliament in England.

The contributors raise many interesting individual points. They stress the variety of possible sermon forms and indeed the inclusion of public religious debate as a form of preaching. The writers on Christian sermons focus almost exclusively on the internationally known great preachers of the day, whose sermons attracted large audiences wherever they went even though interpreters were needed to translate their words into the local vernacular. Such preachers sometimes directed morality plays as part of their presentations. Gabriella Zarri provides a different insight into possible variant forms of preaching describing the entirely silent theatrical rapture that overtook Stephana Quinzani, a Poor Clare tertiary, who, losing consciousness, re-enacted the Passion in her own person (a performance which she eventually repeated before the Duke of Mantua in 1499).

Although the editors attempt, in their introduction, to draw the essays together into a connected whole, there is unfortunately little reference from one essay to another and no sustained attempt at a comparison of the ways in which preaching in the different traditions varied and what this can tell us of their cultural expectations. For example, many of the popular Jewish preachers or *Maggidim* at the time were not rabbis. They preached mainly morality in the vernacular using proverbs and folk tales – a comparison of these sermons with those of the Christian friars, or the preaching of the Islamic *wa'iz* or *qass* could illuminate the extent and nature of differences

and similarities in the cultures, the subject matter of their sermons, and their pastoral concerns. Similarly, the relationship of the Christian pulpit, the Jewish *bimah*, and the Islamic *minbar* might cast light on the function of the sermon in the different liturgies. A comparison of the acceptance of oral traditions in the different religious sects, such as the Karaites, the different Islamic traditions, orthodox and heretical Christian churches would provide a sharper context for essays on specific aspects of preaching.

While all the essays add something to our understanding of the importance of preaching in the social as well as the religious life of their respective medieval communities, and the way in which sermons underpinned or subverted the maintenance of order and the acceptance of law, the opportunity to draw the ideas together into a new synthesis has been missed.

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Johnston, Andrew James, *Performing the Middle Ages from 'Beowulf' to 'Othello'* (Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 15), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. viii, 342; R.R.P. €70.00; ISBN 9782503527550.

In his study, *Performing the Middle Ages from 'Beowulf' to 'Othello'*, Andrew James Johnston sets out to 'explore the cultural self-knowledge of medieval texts' and to reveal how those texts critique a concept of modernity which 'attempts to define itself through casting the Middle Ages in the role of its absolute Other' (p. 313). His concurrent mission seems to be a dismantling of scholarly constructions that fix the Middle Ages 'in the realm of the mindlessly archaic' against the supposed self-awareness of the Renaissance (p. 313). Johnston chooses as his field of exploration the area of aristocratic nostalgia and heroic chivalry; he also chooses five texts, each of which presents an image of the chivalric warrior and critiques the culture which produced it. These five texts – *Beowulf*, Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale', *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, and Shakespeare's *Othello* – share an uneasy relationship, representing different periods, genres, and places in the canon, yet each, Johnston demonstrates, reveals an alternative reading of medieval chivalry.

Johnston's approach is reassuringly methodical. He opens each chapter with an extensive survey and critique of the scholarly literature. He then moves on to a close textual analysis of one or more passages that reveal either a self-knowledge or narrative contradiction within the structure of the text. Central to each chapter is a discussion of either orality or narrative

subjectivity, as Johnston uncovers self-consciously literary forms of discourse which function as a means of cultural self-scrutiny and self-fashioning.

The most immediate impression of Johnston's 342-page volume, however, is that of the overwhelming amount of scholarly debate (presented with a surfeit of footnotes) surrounding passages sometimes as brief as five lines. Johnston spends a lot of time sorting critics into proponents or opponents of New Criticism, and maintaining a critical distance from the New Historicism, which, he claims, reduces the heterogeneity of texts to a 'total explanatory system' (p. 14). While introducing his own approach as fundamentally historicist, he does trot out a requisite list of various critical theorists whose work has informed his understanding. His methodology relies primarily on traditional textual analysis, along with a liberal dose of literary anthropology and cultural history, and his arguments are ultimately text-based, dealing with matters of semantics, syntax, structure, translation, and dramatic irony. But at times he offers up Foucault (most often as a foil) and Bakhtin, along with a few other postmodern theorists, to bolster his interpretation. Johnston's frequent comparative detours – touching on twentieth-century crime novels, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Aztec deification myths, among others – are always interesting, if somewhat tangential and lengthier than perhaps necessary, and they add a postmodern eclecticism to his medievalist view.

Given the title of this monograph, one might expect Johnston to make more use of theories of performance and performativity, which in his introduction he claims offer 'a particularly elegant way of investing a text with the potential for generating meanings for which a given culture may at first glance possess no modes of direct expression' (p. 17). However, his exploration of 'performance' is limited to a reading of the narrative interplay, contextuality, and intertextuality enacted by a particular text. Johnston thoroughly describes but does not always add to the orality/literacy debate, camping on the side of literacy when it comes to *Beowulf* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, and while he also investigates performativity as identity construction (à la Judith Butler) when dealing with *Othello* and Renaissance self-fashioning, his interpretation again focuses on narrative strategies and textual nuances. Building on this interpretation of 'performance', Johnston examines Queen Wealhtheow's use of oratory and ritual gestures in *Beowulf*, the Knight's voyeuristic narration of Emily's religious rituals and subsequent loss of narrative control, Gawain's moral struggle with confession and secrecy, the feigned orality of the Wheel of Fortune and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*'s narrative of conquest and victory, and *Othello*'s use of chivalric Romance and travelogue, to create a language of seduction and self-fashioning.

Ultimately for Johnston, performance and performativity comprise a linguistic and discursive exercise, either for the author, narrator, or characters involved. Nevertheless, Johnston succeeds in persuading us that these medieval texts deal with subjectivity in a more complex way than traditional readings have posited, and in causing us to rethink the binary opposition that has been constructed between the medieval and the modern.

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Kocher, Suzanne, *Allegories of Love in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; cloth; pp. ix, 216; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503519029.

Marguerite Porete was burned in Paris in 1310, presumably for composing the *Mirror of Simple Souls*, an allegorical account of the soul's journey toward divine union. But whether Porete indeed was executed because of this multi-genre theological treatise is not entirely clear. As Suzanne Kocher explains, getting oneself burnt at the stake was not easy in France in 1310, and the fact that Porete managed to do so probably says more about her personality and Philip the Fair's obsessive need to prove himself orthodox in the wake of his despoliation of the Templars than it says about the work's heretical content. However, Kocher's goal is not to evaluate whether Porete's text was heretical – she understands heresy to be an element of reception – but to analyse it as a 'three-dimensional structure that constantly and explicitly extends outward from the allegory towards the readers and their world' (p. 13). Arguing that the allegory of the work represents collective human psychology (it is not 'purely individual in scope. In Porete's text the personified psychological faculties are each less than whole people, but together they represent human minds collectively,' (p. 13)), Kocher takes us through the ways in which the Soul, after much effort, finally realizes the gift of union.

In a long opening chapter, Kocher discusses how the work may have been performed. She explains that Marguerite, arrested in Valenciennes, was ordered to desist from reading her book aloud. Because the *Mirror* would have taken roughly seven hours to read, Marguerite may have constructed it deliberately in 'brief idea-cycles' or sound bites, to give listeners passing through the main ideas. Kocher then considers sources for the *Mirror*. These include, among others, contemporary lyric poetry (Valenciennes held a *puy*), *Roman de la rose*, Chrétien de Troyes's *Knight of the Cart*, Gérard of Liège's *Quinque incitamenta*, Beatrice of Nazareth, and Hadewijch of Antwerp. She

further suggests that Marguerite's 'Little Holy Church' may derive from the visual convention in manuscript illustration of donors holding a tiny church (p. 58).

Chapters 2 through 7 consider the wealth of allegorical figures and relations through which Porete describes the Soul's movement toward God. In what follows, I can only give a hint of the fullness and interest of Kocher's discussion. 'Gender in the Religious Allegory of Love: From Active Woman to Passive Souls', argues that Porete's most frequent way of approaching the relationship between the Soul and God is through allegories of romantic love, running the entire gamut of gender combinations. At different times, the Soul is represented as the female and male lover of a male and female beloved. The other allegorical characters shift genders as well. She concludes that although the Soul's journey is spiritual rather than physical, gender remains an important mode for representing relations unrelated to the physical body.

Chapter 3, 'From Spiritual Servitude to Freedom: The Allegory of Social Rank', analyses Porete's allegories of social rank, showing that the phenomenon is represented as a series of stages through which one can pass, much more easily than in real life, where status was rigid. Especially interesting is Kocher's discussion of the Soul's serfdom. The Soul labours, which requires her self-will, the very opposite of the spiritual passivity that Porete describes as the figure's final goal.

In the fourth chapter, 'Wealth, Poverty, and the Allegory of Economic Exchange', Kocher discusses the various valences of wealth and poverty as they appear in the allegories, making clear how fundamentally ambivalent this society was toward money and trade. The Soul is generous, requesting nothing for herself, and yet she is implicated in a system founded upon a search for recompense.

Chapter 5, 'Models of Interpretation; Allegory, Comparisons, and the making of Meaning', proposes that the allegorical figures in the *Mirror* teach their readers/listeners how to interpret texts. Although the allegory seems 'tightly controlled,' Kocher argues that the treatise recognizes its inability to 'regulate the ways people construe it' (p. 164). Kocher considers why Porete chose to write in allegory in Chapter 6: 'The Functions of Allegory in the *Mirror of Simple Souls*'. In the concluding chapter, she discusses the place of the body (or, more accurately, its absence) in Porete's notion of the human being, enumerating some of the ways in which the treatise functions as a counter-example to many current assumptions about religious, and especially female religious, writers.

Kocher's insights are fascinating, sometimes startling. As a reviewer I hesitate to offer comments that amount to re-writing an author's book – but

I could not help wishing that the insights had been more clearly signposted. The book's structure (a long introductory chapter to Porete's life and method followed by six short chapters, each devoted to a particular aspect of her allegory) does not adequately indicate how pertinent some of the material is for medieval literature in general. The fourth chapter on economic exchange, for example, is so rich in insight into the effects of the changing economic system on affective relations that it seems a pity not to draw larger conclusions. The fifth chapter on meaning is likewise so suggestive for medieval literature in general that one would like to see its insights inserted into larger current discussions of allegory. In any case, Kocher's reading of the *Mirror* illuminates not only the work's strangeness but its familiarity.

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Laroche, Rebecca, *Medical Authority and Englishwomen's Herbal Texts, 1550–1650* (Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; cloth; pp. xii, 196; 13 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754666783.

This book explores the wide variety of women's relationships in the period 1550–1650 with herbals, that is, books containing descriptions of herbs, their properties and virtues, and their medicinal and other uses. The Introduction stresses that the herbals will be studied for their utility rather than, as in the past, for their literary influence. Although ostensibly written for a male audience of physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, such books were often owned, read, and used by gentlewomen, who thus inserted themselves into the practice of medicine from which they were theoretically excluded by their gender and lack of formal training. But by copying, adapting or epitomizing recipes from herbals, these women appropriated the books' authority and made the knowledge they contained available to those unable to afford handsome illustrated folio volumes.

Each of the four following chapters deals with a discrete topic. Chapter 1 is a close reading of some of the herbals to uncover their implied gender positions. These can be overt: John Gerard's 1597 *Herball* contains the only reference before 1650 to a named woman practitioner, a gentlewoman who helped her poor neighbours out of charity and who is implicitly contrasted with beggars, witches, and unlicensed practitioners who charged for their services. They can also be less obvious, bearing on the English herbal genre's uneasy sense of belatedness: written in English, printed, and therefore more

widely available than their continental predecessors. Laroche considers John Parkinson's *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640), which refers to 'this Manlike Worke of Herbes and Plants' and 'masculinizes the herbal tradition' (p. 34) by contrasting the medicinal uses of herbs with their use by women which privileges 'delight', and William Turner's *New Herball* (1551), which scapegoats illiterate 'herbe wives', servants of apothecaries, making them responsible for the corruption of knowledge. Laroche then looks at ways in which herbals use the myth of Circe the witch (often in the entries for the herbs mullein or moly), invoking anxieties about unregulated medical practitioners, with the herbalists playing the prophylactic role of Hermes. The gentlewoman practitioner, in contrast, is associated not with the witch Circe but with queens, specifically Elizabeth I, dedicatee of two of the earlier herbals and constructed as the mother of the nation, hence responsible for her children's health.

Chapter 2 deals with a completely different subject: female ownership of herbals, of which Laroche has accumulated more than twenty examples. She wrings an impressive amount of information out of a few signatures, and in some cases has acquired other documentary evidence such as letters or original compositions, to supplement the bare names. Laroche points out that a signature claims ownership, of a text and of an expensive book; indicates literacy (or steps towards literacy); associates the signatory with the authoritative status of the book; warns off rival owners; implies a future audience; or may mark a gift, a change in ownership. All these possibilities of course apply to other types of books, such as books of devotion, but Laroche argues that in herbals we learn about the descent of knowledge, involving male as well as female relatives, and about shifts between private and communal ownership. Female ownership also shows how knowledge cannot be ring-fenced by the medical establishment's attempts at institutional control.

Chapter 3 examines the place of herbals in the life writings of three early modern women. Margaret Hoby's diary shows her herbal (Gerard's, apparently) filling the gap between the sudden death of one physician and the acquisition of a replacement. Grace Mildmay's autobiography witnesses to her extensive medical practice, largely learnt from her governess, and her development of recipes from the herbals. Elizabeth Isham wrote a less well-known autobiography. After deciding against marriage she determined to study the herbal, rather than Latin, as more edifying and also possibly because her family had suffered from physicians and their often invasive treatments. In addition, Isham also valued the connection between the herbal and her practice of embroidery. Laroche argues that herbals as thus seen in the social context of individual women's lives transcend the merely utilitarian.

Chapter 4 returns to the analysis of a literary text, Isabella Whitney's 1573 collection of poems whose title, *A Sweet Nosgay, or Plesant Posy*, uses a herbal metaphor: flowers warded off the plague. Laroche then analyses Whitney's self-construction as a 'simple' herbal practitioner who charges for her poems (which women could not safely do for herbs) and her critique of the cost of health care in London.

This book also contains two appendices and thirteen apposite illustrations. Specialists in early modern women's writing and history, in medical history, and in the history of the book, should all find it useful and thought-provoking.

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Larsson, Inger, *Pragmatic Literacy and the Medieval Use of the Vernacular: The Swedish Example* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 16), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. xiv, 250; 5 b/w & 23 colour illustrations, 2 b/w tables, 2 b/w line art; R.R.P. €90.00; ISBN 9782503527475.

The title is a little misleading, given that preference is given in this study to pragmatic literature rather than literacy, the latter being discussed unproblematically (see pp. 4, 8, and *passim*) and succinctly. The book is divided in two parts: the first introduces the literate community responsible for drafting, witnessing, and sealing official documents (deeds, charters, announcements, etc.) between the twelfth and early fifteenth centuries; the second part surveys extant legal documents, their function, style, and content.

Accordingly, five chapters (Part II of the book, divided into Chapters 5–9) are dedicated to the review and categorization of legal documents, making this section of the work the most detailed and interesting. Here Inger Larsson maps the types of charters produced in medieval Sweden (Chapter 5), the traces of oral tradition in these documents and the rituals surrounding land property sales (Chapter 6), the progressive standardization of formulas, professional language, and content in the charters from the third decade of the thirteenth century (Chapter 7), and the development of a terminology to define and describe official documents in Swedish. This section of the book is, to my knowledge, the first comprehensive discussion of the development of secular writing and bureaucracy in medieval Sweden and offers a clear picture of the legal processes behind the issuing of deeds and the way in which the oral rituals are incorporated into the budding written culture.

Regrettably, the first part of the book (Chapters 1–4) all too briefly introduces the leaders (Knut Eriksson, Magnus Birgersson, and Magnus

Eriksson) and literate men and women (clerks, lawmen, scribes, witnesses) who helped shape the Swedish central legal system and who contributed to the written culture of their societies. The elephant in this work is the socio-cultural realm of literacy. Little consideration is given to the social context in which these deeds were produced, the way in which these documents would have been perceived, read, and used, and the cultural activities around the production of legal written texts.

In his seminal work on literacy, Brian Stock criticized historians who 'focused on proving the existence of literacy during the Middle Ages, on establishing its alleged connections with economic development, and on tabulating the best they could the numbers of readers and writers' (*The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 5). Stock also pointed out the dangers of relying on statistics and written practices outside their context. It seems a pity his call for the investigation of the complex factors between literacy and other socio-cultural factors is not picked up in this book.

As Larsson makes clear throughout the book, though, her key and only source of inspiration for this study is the tremendously influential work by Michael T. Clanchy (*From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1979, 2nd edition printed by Blackwell in 1993). Clanchy's book has the merit of addressing the complex relationship between orality and writing. However, more recent works have gone further by addressing broader issues of intellectual life, schooling, social rituals, and cultural exchanges (see Richard Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic Literacy. East and West*, 1997 and Harvey J. Graff (ed.), *Literacy and Historical Development*, 2007). Bibliography on medieval literacy is infinite. It is therefore somewhat surprising that Larsson has not taken advantage of the first book to appear in the same Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy series under which her book has been published: *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, edited by Marco Mostert (1999). This first volume of the series offers an extremely valuable survey of studies and issues of medieval communication and literacy, and discusses the hiatus between literacy and textuality.

In sum, Larsson's book is a useful survey of Swedish and late medieval pragmatic written legal documents which hopefully will soon be followed by a fuller study of medieval communication and literacy in medieval Sweden, an investigation, as the author herself points out, of the 'social and geographical spread of the use of writing' (p. 199).

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Léglu, Catherine E., *Multilingualism and Mother Tongue in Medieval French, Occitan, and Catalan Narratives* (Penn State Romance Studies), University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010; pp. 216; 5 illustrations; R.R.P. US\$35.00; ISBN 9780271036731.

Catherine Léglu examines a complex literary and linguistic phenomenon in vernacular works composed between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Providing clear synopses, detailed analysis, and new readings of the narratives, she explores ways in which significant texts employ multilingualism and the mother tongue, a notion to be replaced by ‘other tongue’ or ‘(m)other tongue’. She aims to examine ‘the literary use of competing Romance vernaculars in the later Middle Ages’ (p. 13), in examples of multilingual interaction, taking into account cultural and geographic differences and socio-political factors relating to individual texts. She moves with ease among the different languages and supplies appropriate English translations. The book has three parts, each with three chapters. Nineteen texts are examined closely and extensively, one or more in each chapter, of which the aim and fulfilment are made explicit (e.g. pp. 161 and 175). As is acknowledged, Chapter 1 and parts of Chapters 3 and 5 have already been published, but are here integrated into a wider investigation.

The Introduction opens with an engaging commentary on two pages of a manuscript of Peyre de Paternas’s *Libre de sufficientia e de necessitat* (Paris, BNF, fr. 3313A), a bilingual treatise (c. 1350), where sections of Latin text alternate with Occitan translation ‘en nostra lingua maternal’, the language the Austin Friar and his Limousin dedicatee share. Furthermore, the manuscript was copied in Avignon by a French and Francophone Breton team. This kind of multilingual cultural interaction was then possible.

In Part I, The Myths of Multilingualism, four Occitan texts are studied: the twelfth-century epic, *Girart de Roussillon*, Arnaut Vidal’s *Guilhem de la Barra*, a translation of Paolino Veneto’s *Compendium* (a universal history in vertical genealogical tables), and the *Leys d’Amor*. Images of the Tower of Babel and tongues of fire figure in the discussion of the hybrid linguistic and generic character of these Occitan works.

Part II, Language Politics, begins with Bernat Metge’s *Lo Somni* (c. 1399), a dream poem in which material from Latin and Tuscan sources is rendered in Catalan, followed by the trilingual *História de l’amat Frondino e de Brisona*, where dialogue and narrative in three different languages are intertwined, and a love-story in fifteen images, without words. In Chapters 5 and 6, the Sleeping Beauty motif is tracked, firstly in *novas* in hybrid languages, where the problematical association of language and lineage is expressed, then in

monolingual French texts, where an unspoken incest narrative underlies tales relating to exogamy.

Part III, *The Monolanguage*, deals firstly with the multilingual *Paris and Vienne* tradition, which probably originated in Provence, although no Occitan version has survived. Pierre de La Cépède, author of the French version, seems to have accessed a Catalan version via his knowledge of Occitan, and wrote a new romance in his adopted language (pp. 144–47). The next example, *Lystoire du Chevalier Pierre de Provence et de la Belle Maquelonne* (c. 1453), is a French romance originating in Provence with recognisable topography and an unacknowledged intertextual connection with the French prose *Roman de Troie* tradition. The final chapter contains five examples of monolingual travel writing, mostly in French, with particular attention to the Provençal-born Antoine de La Sale and his compilation/translation *La Salade* (1444), which shows how the mother tongue can be manipulated.

The book has no overall conclusion, which is more or less in line with the initial specification that texts are to be read individually, ‘rather than as part of a grand metanarrative of what happens to the literary vernaculars in this region and period’ (p. 13). While in their composition the texts reveal aspects of language transfer and hybridization, their content also reflects language awareness and versatility: Berte, in *Girart de Roussillon*, has a command of five languages; Maquelonne, travelling in foreign places, uses a common mother tongue. The author of *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* maligns the arrogant French and their language (p. 99), at about the same time as Brunetto Latini chose French, because he was in France and French was more pleasant and more widely known than Italian. Of the three languages studied, Occitan was to lose ground to French and Catalan, which for political reasons became national languages.

Notes, Bibliography, and Index complete the volume. In the Bibliography, only two of the texts studied are classed as ‘Primary Sources’, the remainder appearing among ‘Other Works’. Neither Gérard Gouiran’s edition of *Le Livre des aventures de Monseigneur Guilhem de la Barra* (cited on p. 198, note 2), nor the earlier edition by E. Müller (1930) is listed.

The book contributes significantly to the knowledge and appreciation of Romance literature in the later Middle Ages, and especially of the Occitan *novas* genre, which, wedged between lyric poetry and romance, has tended until recently to be overlooked. It also sheds light on the moveable borders and shared cultural capital of the Romance languages.

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Loud, Graham A., trans., *The Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa: The History of the Expedition of the Emperor Frederick and Related Texts* (Crusade Texts in Translation, 19), Farnham, Ashgate, 2010; hardback; pp. xvi, 225; 2 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9780754665755.

In the latest volume of Ashgate's 'Crusade Texts in Translation' series, Graham Loud collects and translates what he rightly labels the 'principal accounts' of the German crusade that set out in 1189. As Loud notes, this expedition, launched in response to the loss of much of the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem to Saladin, is often somewhat neglected by Anglophone historians. The latter are often more interested in the slightly later venture led by the English king Richard the Lionheart and his French counterpart, Philippe II. The neglect of the German contribution to the Third Crusade is owed, perhaps, to its somewhat anticlimactic ending: following a lengthy journey through Hungary, Byzantium, and Asia Minor, its leader, the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, drowned somewhat ignominiously in a river without actually reaching the Holy Land. Although the crusaders struggled on to Antioch, the army was decimated by disease and subsequently dispersed. The expedition can be summed up in a remark by the anonymous author of the *Historia de Expeditione Friderici Imperatoris*: 'For day after day, good things and happiness, and the abundance of a good market, were promised to us, but it all turned out very differently' (p. 115). And yet Barbarossa's crusade is, as Loud frequently highlights, worth remembering, not least because it possesses particularly rich and detailed sources.

The centrepiece of Loud's collection, and the work that occupies most of the volume, is a full translation of the *Historia de Expeditione*. This offers a near-contemporary account of preparations preceding the German crusade and of its progress. As Loud notes, the level of detail relating to this expedition's participants is far in excess of that which appears in sources for earlier crusades. Further information on the majority of these participants is helpfully provided in the footnotes, although it is unclear why certain figures, such as Gaubert of Aspremont and Adalbert of Wesselberg, are excluded from this treatment.

Alongside the *Historia de Expeditione*, the volume includes material from two closely related texts. The second item is a translation of the *Historia Peregrinorum* from its prologue up until the crusaders' arrival at Vienna. As the remainder of this chronicle is very similar to the *Historia de Expeditione* and seems to have drawn upon a version of it, Loud does not translate the remainder of the text. He does, however, include significant variations in the *Historia Peregrinorum*'s account in the footnotes to the *Historia de Expeditione*.

A third related text is the chronicle of Magnus of Reichersberg. This latter is significant for its use of the 'diary' of one of the participants, Tageno, dean of the cathedral of Passau, which was also a source for the *Historia de Expeditione*. The font size of Loud's translation of Magnus's chronicle is varied to indicate which parts are Magnus's own and which are taken directly from Tageno.

Alongside these three key sources for Frederick's crusade, Loud includes four additional texts. One of these is an anonymous letter, possibly addressed to a German cleric, concerning the emperor's death. It is followed by excerpts from the chronicle of Otto of St Blasien, a text which gives some sense of how Frederick's crusade came to be regarded by the next generation. Loud also includes a short account of a group of German crusaders who did not take the land route but who decided to sail to the Holy Land by ship. On the way, they became involved with a Portuguese army in the conquest of the town of Silves. The volume is rounded off by an example of Frederick's pre-crusade preparations, the land peace issued at Nuremberg in 1188.

This collection of seven sources is preceded by two maps, three genealogical tables, and a 30-page introduction. The latter begins by exploring the complex relationship between the three major near-contemporary chronicle sources. In addition to offering a broad survey of other accounts of the crusade, it also explores three key contextual issues: Frederick's efforts to ensure peace and stability; his diplomacy; and the financing of the expedition. The introduction ends by challenging some of the myths surrounding the German crusade, such as the idea that the army dissolved with the death of the Emperor. While this introductory material is useful, it could have been organized more clearly, perhaps by using sub-headings.

Two further criticisms of the volume concern problems with the spacing between words on p. 54 and a number of typographical errors in the bibliography (the entries for articles by Assmann, Hamilton, Kraus, Murray, Töpfer, and Wolter are all cases where the quotation marks have gone awry). These minor points aside, this will prove an extremely useful collection to those teaching the Third Crusade, the Reconquista, and the history of the late twelfth-century Empire.

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Malmros, Rikke, *Vikingerne syn på militær og samfund: Belyst gennem skjaldenes fyrstedigtningen*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press; 2010; hardback; pp. 384; R.R.P. €46.95; ISBN 9788779344976

The title of this book might be translated rather literally as ‘Attitudes of the Vikings to the military and society, illuminated through the poems of the skalds in honour of princes’. Despite first appearances, it is not a conventional monograph, but rather a collection of articles by the Danish historian Rikke Malmros. Four of the six Danish language pieces appearing here have been previously published elsewhere, one in *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* and three in the Danish *Historisk Tidsskrift*. They are reprinted in what appears to be unaltered form, and this does involve a modest amount of repetition and overlap, notably in the explanation of the nature of Old Norse skaldic verse. After the six Danish language articles appear five short pieces in English. These are summaries of five of the Danish articles, though they are not labelled as such, and a reader with no Danish might need time to become aware of their nature. (In the following discussion the titles given to the summaries by the various translators are employed when referring to the Danish texts.)

The first article after a brief introduction is ‘Danish research in the early medieval *leiðangr*’. It has not appeared previously and provides a summary of Danish views on the *leiðangr* and related aspects of Viking age society from 1756 to Malmros herself. (It is difficult to translate *leiðangr* without implicitly buying into a debate: ‘levy, esp. by sea (including men, ships and money)’ is the definition in Zoëga’s *Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*.) Here, as throughout the book, Malmros is particularly interested in the relationship between the various scholars’ views and the social attitudes both of their own time and of later generations. The useful and relatively extended English summary, translated by Richard Cole, provides some guidance for English readers that is not found in the Danish, but the expression is often fractured: ‘The *illustres* and *magnates* are leaders of the navy, they are great in the people, the *uulgus*, by natural right and stand in no service to the king’ (p. 308).

Next follows a short piece, described as ‘Indledende bemærkninger’ (‘Introductory observations’) to the following ‘*Leiðangr* and skaldic poetry’. This introduction had not been published earlier, and no English summary is provided. Malmros focuses here on new archaeological evidence about medieval Scandinavian ships, and *inter alia* corrects an error that she attributes to a ‘hastig gennemgang af min daværende notesamling’ – hasty examination of her notes.

'*Leiðangr* and skaldic poetry', originally published 1985 and probably the central article here, is based on Malmros's argument that though usually overlooked by historians, skaldic poetry is a generally trustworthy source of evidence for certain important aspects of Scandinavian social and military organization in the Viking age, a standpoint that she believes to be supported by a correlation between descriptions of ships in the poems and the evidence of archaeology. It is followed by three articles reprinted from the Copenhagen *Historisk Tidsskrift*. 'The pagan skaldic poets' view of society' (1999), her examination of fifteen skaldic poems, leads her to reject suggestions that Scandinavia in the late pagan period was in any Lockean 'state of nature'. 'Royal power and navy in Norway and Denmark around 1100' (2005) uses skaldic verse and Latin sources to elucidate a slightly later period – mainly in fact the eleventh century. The final article, 'The authority of skaldic poetry as a historical source' (2006), subtitled 'En discussion with Niels Lund' in the Danish, is a response to an article by Lund in which he challenged her views, not least her belief in the reliability of skaldic verse as an historical source.

Malmros repeatedly emphasizes that she is a historian with a limited command of Old Norse. She refers to help received from philologists, notably Katrina Attwood. She freely admits to having read the poetry in translation and in making careful use of commentaries by Finnur Jónsson and others, and when she quotes skaldic verses it is in Danish translation. These circumstances may diminish any interest the book might have for scholars more interested in the skaldic compositions as poetry. Latin texts appear also to have been read in translation, the author at one point (p. 25) admitting an inability to read an untranslated Latin text from 1831.

Despite some minor flaws, such as incorrect page references to the present volume when the articles reprinted here are listed in its bibliography (despite correct page references in footnotes), and an erroneous indication in the bibliography that Vilhjálmur Finsen published a translation of the Skálholtsbók *Grágás*, this is an attractively presented book. Its discussion is lively and stimulating. But while the bringing together of an author's articles scattered over diverse festschriften and conference proceedings is often a very useful service to scholarship, one might have some misgivings about a book largely devoted to the republication of material that has appeared fairly recently in two very prominent journals likely to be readily available to most potential academic readers.

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Martin, Molly, *Vision and Gender in Malory's Morte Darthur*, Woodbridge & Rochester, D. S. Brewer, 2010; hardback; pp. 214; R.R.P. £50.00; ISBN 9781843842422.

Morte Darthur continues to fascinate the modern academic as a famously contested example of the evolution of the novel into a form more familiar to today's audiences. The text has been mined for its construction of chivalric ideals, its use of previous Arthurian material, and the narrative flow of the tales into a contested single book in Caxton's edit. With *Vision and Gender in Malory's Morte Darthur*, Molly Martin advances the discussion of chivalric and gendered norms in the *Morte* through a detailed analysis of the way in which vision focuses, limits, and directs gendered behaviour through the prism of chivalric and noble society.

Opening with a close discussion of previous literature on gender construction in the *Morte*, Martin adds to it a survey of the discussion on gender construction more broadly, examining the evolving use of 'the gaze' as a touchstone for criticism throughout the visual media such as film. As some of the feminist media criticism may be unfamiliar to readers steeped in narrative analysis, Martin's introduction is a highly useful primer to the material. In addition, Martin provides a solid indication of the way she intends to wield her consideration of the primacy of the gaze across the *Morte*.

The analysis is well written and typically accessible, with a strong use of secondary sources to illustrate and bolster the arguments being put forward. Although the specific thrust of this study – the ways in which the visual act helps construct the visibility of gender, especially 'seen' as a performative act itself – seems a relatively new critique to apply to Malory, Martin displays a comfortable familiarity with established research and revisits it with a fresh approach, joining up the dots in a manner that made me as a reader wonder why no-one had thought to analyse Malory in this fashion before: that is, the ways in which Malory so clearly focuses on how his characters see, and aim to be seen, in order to emerge into the reality of Arthur's Camelot.

Centring the analysis upon specific figures of masculinity and femininity, the close reading identifies the characters' use of sight as a tool for performance and the underpinning of their socialization. In Martin's *Morte*, men and women cannot help but invite visibility: to do so allows them to publicly perform gender roles and find a place in Arthurian society. Gareth provides a paradigm of this visible masculinity in Martin's reading, while the two Elaynes provide a useful contrast to explore how women, too, are gendered by their visibility. Palomydes and other lesser knightly characters, depict how those who seek invisibility or who are invisible due to their lack

of visibility to their female love interests can only partake partially in the narrative of male chivalric achievement. Lancelot and Trystam are used to illustrate the contestation of male identity between the requirements of the (invisible) affair and the (visible) gender performance, and the grail quest, including the interpolation of Percivale's sister, highlights the ways in which Malory uses the source material to continue the emphasis on the physical realm and its use of vision, rather than spiritual 'seeing'.

This is an important consideration which suggests Martin's belief in the overall unanimity of the text, addressing but ultimately sidestepping some of the academic discussion regarding whether the *Morte* works best as a series of tales or not. Although Martin seems to agree with the 'single text' approach to the *Morte* – as her visual analysis highlights the similarity across the Grail and other narratives in their use of vision and gender construction – it is one of the few disappointing areas of this study that she only touches on this debate, and does not use her overall analysis to more clearly discuss the ramifications of a visual approach that to her works across the *Morte*, papering over any other discontinuities.

Overall Martin's contentions are sound and her use of the text is skilful, artfully connecting and refuting secondary sources as needed. As mentioned, by the time the reader gets through the first chapter or so, Malory's emphasis on vision and sightlines, as a constructor of the world of the audiences (both internal and external to the text), seems so obvious that it opens up new possibilities in reading the *Morte*. It is important to note that this visual reading of characterization and authorship returns an unexpected measure of agency to the characters: trapped as they are within certain gender expectations, their ability to be aware of the audience's gaze and choose their performances skilfully and thoughtfully grants the text a postmodernist sheen amongst the medieval chivalry.

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Matthews, David, *Writing to the King: Nation, Kingship and Literature in England 1250–1350*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010; hardback; pp. xv, 221; R.R.P. AU\$145.00, £50.00; ISBN 9780521111379.

David Matthews adroitly combines literary criticism and historical analysis in this study of rhetorical appeals to England's Plantagenet monarchs. One of the author's principal aims is to examine a range of lesser-known works from the period c. 1250–1350, many of which had attracted the attention

of nineteenth-century critics but subsequently fell from favour. Matthews argues that the more recent extension of critical interest to the literature of the fifteenth century needs to be matched by paying greater attention to English literary output in the century or so before the activities of Chaucer, Gower, Langland, and the *Gawain* poet (and before, to use the author's own phrase, the 'Ricardian explosion of vernacularity', p. 158). The formation of a view that gives coherence to a literary period spanning approximately 1350–1550, while commendable in eroding the traditional medieval/Tudor boundary, implicitly denies the possibility of finding worthwhile objects of study in the preceding period. This is the oversight which Matthews intends to correct.

In doing so, he turns frequently to the two major themes indicated by his subtitle: kingship and nationhood. The organising motif of 'writing to the king' refers to the narrative voices in many of the works under consideration, which often apostrophize the monarch or those close to him. For Matthews, these texts form part of a 'tradition of public critique' (p. 12) which uses the device of direct personal address while in reality speaking to a much wider English political community. While the author is concerned to trace the rise of national sentiment from the thirteenth century, he notes that a sense of Englishness did not necessarily find itself expressed in English. Latin and Anglo-Norman works are equally important contributors to the cultural milieu that Matthews identifies.

The Latin text known as *The Song of Lewes*, for example, comments at length on the limits that should be placed on kingship. In clearly supporting Simon de Montfort and the baronial party that had been victorious at Lewes in 1264, it thus places itself firmly in the tradition of *Magna Carta*. To complicate matters further, it lionizes a Frenchman (de Montfort) as a heroic figure defending the English nation against royalist tyranny, personified not by Henry III himself but by his brother and son (Richard of Cornwall and the Lord Edward). After de Montfort's death, other texts represented him as a martyr figure, almost another Becket, simultaneously criticizing royal policy and creating a hero of English liberties from the figure of a dead French aristocrat.

After this discussion of the Barons' War of the 1260s, the chapters proceed both chronologically and thematically, involving consideration of literary responses to Edward I's Scottish campaigns, the failures of Edward II, and the early years of Edward III. The final two chapters highlight an interesting thematic contrast in works from the early fourteenth century. Chapter 4 focuses on a widespread literature of complaint against social and economic conditions in the pre-plague period. Typical is the so-called 'Song

of the Husbandman' which adopts the narrative persona of peasants bewailing excessive taxation and official expropriation of their meagre assets. Poems in this genre, Matthews notes, lack any strong national sensibility, concentrating instead on 'kingship's impact on a local community or class fraction' (p. 134). In this context, 'writing to the king' is the expression of grievance, although the king himself is often shielded from blame by the common pre-modern motif of shifting antagonism onto nefarious but nebulous 'evil counsellors'.

The contrasting set of works, discussed in Chapter 5, is more approving in its attitude to the monarch and displays a much more self-conscious nationalism, albeit one that is contingent and not yet fully formed. Here the poetry of Laurence Minot is prominent. Minot, the 'poor man's Froissart' (p. 137), has not been to the taste of modern sensibilities on account of his jingoistic patriotism and rabid xenophobia; to read him out loud, Matthews asserts, 'is automatically to abuse the Scots' (p. 140). The French fare no better. Thus Minot is emblematic, for Matthews, of the emergence of national identification based on fear of foreigners; and of mutually dependent categories of 'insiderdom' and 'outsiderdom' (p. 152).

Matthews therefore demonstrates the emergence of a sense of Englishness throughout his period of study, but it is an Englishness that is inconsistent, takes a variety of forms, and is by no means a simple precursor of later national sentiments. In arguing that a vibrant political discourse existed both in non-English and in vernacular texts in the century before 1350, Matthews has shed valuable light on a number of neglected works. By no means are they all literary masterpieces, but their political focus and their thematic priorities make them an interesting object of study in their own right, as well as providing a useful portrait of the cultural heritage from which Chaucer and his contemporaries emerged.

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Palmer, James T., *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World, 690–900* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 19), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. xii, 324; 2 b/w line art; R.R.P. €70.00; ISBN 9782503519111.

James T. Palmer's study of the early Anglo-Saxon 'mission' to the Continent is a varied and interesting examination of a range of sources, including hagiographies from the Frankish world, and chronicles from both sides of the English Channel. Palmer's principal focus is the rewriting of Anglo-Saxon

missionaries' *vitae*, and how this reveals changes in attitudes both to the missionary-saints and to the idea of the Continent as a mission field.

The introduction presents us with a very ambitious study in terms of the number of saints and *vitae* that he intends to cover. The book starts with a brief vignette of the martyrdom and rapid rise to sanctity of St Boniface in 754, but he is only one of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries considered here; also included are Willibrord (d. 739), Willehad (d. 789), Alcuin (d. 804), Leoba (d. 782), Willibald (d. 787), Wynnebald (d. 761), Walburga (d. 779), Burchard (d. 752), and Lull (d. 786). The brief historical outline is useful in placing some of the lesser-known characters alongside the political names which are more familiar, and the reflection on modern historiography is broad-ranging.

The first chapter considers the reasons which hagiographers, in particular, imputed to the various Anglo-Saxon missionaries for leaving England, and the way that these were subtly adjusted over time. The initial concept of *peregrinatio*, based on an Irish model, is examined in a range of presentations, and the sense of a pan-Germanic identity is discussed in very competent terms.

In Chapter 2, Palmer goes on to consider the interactions of the missionaries with the political leaders of their times. He looks at how *vitae* written in particular religious houses represented the relationships between saints and the people in power, and compares those representations with those found in chronicles written at the same time. How later groups reworked the *vitae* to support new figures of power, illustrates the growth in importance of these saints.

The third and fourth chapters focus more closely on the hagiographies' representations of the world within which the missionaries were moving. They investigate the extent to which we can draw conclusions about pre-Christian Frankia, and whether the 'mission work' can be considered primary evangelization. Palmer points out that most of the areas to which the missionaries went had previously been Christianized, and many of the cities had existing churches. The missionaries' role was often more of a call to pure religion than an introduction of a new one. The sense of expansion into unknown territories, of taming the wilderness, within the hagiographies is seen to be one largely of convention and promotion of a particular saint.

Chapter 5 considers the hagiographies in relation to the monastic cultures within which they were produced, and compares the *vitae* of saints written at different locations, considering the relation of those religious houses with the cult of the saint. The representation of the saints' own interactions with, and opinions on, monasticism are seen to be more reliant on the attitude of the

hagiographer or the expected audience than on anything externally known about the saint.

In the sixth chapter, Palmer concentrates on the interactions with Rome, as portrayed in the hagiographies, as a means of locating the relationship between the communities and the ideals of papal authority. In considering the impact which the Anglo-Saxons had on Franko-Roman relations, he first outlines the situation before the missionaries arrived, before making brief studies on individual saints' *vitae*. He finally concludes that it is 'the development of hagiographical discourse and reimagined pasts which made papal authority central to missionary activity' (p. 247).

The final chapter examines the impact which accounts of Willibald's journey east, to Byzantium and the Holy Land, had on concepts of the Anglo-Saxon mission. Here, Palmer provides a study of Hygeburg's *Vita Willibaldi [et Wynnebalidi]*, considering the contexts of work in relation to the houses for which it was produced. This chapter is one of the more interesting ones, as Palmer is finally able to approach one text in greater detail, and considers the impact of a holy travelogue on local religious politics. As Palmer points out in the conclusion, this analysis 'reveals a complex interaction of ideals relating to sanctity, sacred spaces, devotional practices, and literary forms' (p. 278).

Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World is a valuable resource for those considering the roles of saints and the ways in which these roles are manipulated by successive hagiographers, and for people interested more generally in the interactions of Anglo-Saxons with the Continent. The sheer scale of the study means that there are some weak areas, most often in the structure of chapters, but the overall text is interesting and informative, and Palmer draws some very useful conclusions.

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Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies – 'When did we become post/human?', 1.1/2 (Spring/Summer 2010), ed. Eileen A. Joy and Craig Dionne, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; paperback; pp. 289; R.R.P. £45.00 (subscription); ISSN 2040-5960; eISSN 2040-5979.

It has been a great pleasure to obtain, and have the opportunity to review, the inaugural double issue of *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, edited by Eileen A. Joy and Craig Dionne and subtitled 'When did we become post/human?' The journal is published in association with the BABEL Working Group, founded in 2004, which operates in North America, the UK, and

Australia. The mainly medievalist scholars involved in the group endeavour – as explained in the volume – to develop new cross-disciplinary bonds between the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and the fine arts in order to ‘formulate and practice new “critical humanism”, as well as to develop a more present-minded medieval studies and a more historically-minded cultural studies’ (www.babelworkinggroup.org).

It is an impressive publication, with its eye-catching and well-chosen graphical design. The packed contents page reveals the following items: an editors’ introduction; three response essays – the three respondents, Andy Mousley, Kate Soper, and Katherine Hayles are known contributors to contemporary discourses on critical, anti-, and post-humanisms; a book review essay; and twenty-eight short essays which constitute the main body of the issue.

The book review essay, written by Suzanne Conklin Akbari, examines three books: *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (J. J. Cohen, 2006); *Premodern to Modern Humanisms: The BABEL Project* (Special issue of *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37.2, E. A. Joy and C. M. Neufeld, eds, 2007); and *Queering the Non/Human* (N. Giffney and M. J. Hird, eds, 2008). In addition, two other studies are reviewed which help to distinguish what ‘the human’ means: *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (C. W. Bynum, 2007); and *The Inner Touch: Archeology of a Sensation* (D. Heller-Roazen, 2007).

The aim of the issue, we are told, is to answer the question of ‘how to account ... for our supposedly novel (and potentially historically destabilizing) post/human present (and future) precisely through a (re)turn to what Julian Yates in this issue calls the “contact zone” of the past?’ (p. 3). The volume smartly tackles the idea of interrelations between ‘human’ and ‘post-human’, an investigation that is propelled by elaborate juxtapositions of true values with modern technological innovations. The editors assert that the entire dilemma of what is human and what is post-human ‘is thoroughly modern because of its important relation to certain technological and medical innovations that could not have even been imagined in the past’ (p. 4).

Nonetheless, the editors state that they do not intend to draw teleological pre-histories or mark points of origin of the contemporary question of the post/human, nor do they wish to emphasize differences or samenesses of the past in light of this question. Thus the main purpose of the journal is to carry out an interdisciplinary, cross-temporal, and socially interventionist medieval cultural relationship with scholars working on a diverse collection of post-medieval subjects, encompassing critical principles that are *un-* or *under-*historicized. In a nutshell, the post/human correlation is conditioned

upon 'a plurality of different, discontinuous and heterogeneous temporalities ... different Nows existing alongside each other' (p. 6). The editors attempt to show that the post/human issue raises questions pertaining to aspects of embodiment, identity, subjectivity, free will, sociality, sexuality, cognition, self-determination, spirituality, representation, expression, ethics, well-being, governance, and the like, and all of them can be reflected upon, thanks to premodern history and culture.

Due to the limitation of space, it is not possible to reflect on every one of the twenty-eight essays in this review, but all of them are highly scholarly and worth reading. In particular, I found the essay by J. Moreland 'Going native, becoming German: Isotopes and identities in late Roman and early medieval England' (pp. 142–49) profoundly intriguing. A few more titles will serve to further highlight the value and versatility of the journal: 'Shakespearean primatology: A diptych' (S. Maisano, pp. 115–23); 'Embodiment and the human from Dante through tomorrow' (D. G. Shaw, pp. 165–72); 'Fictions of life and death: Tomb automata in medieval romance' (E. R. Truitt, pp. 194–98), or 'Of dramatology: Action in the form of tools and machines (Wiener, Plato, Aristotle, Latour, Shakespeare, Bacon)' (H. S. Turner, pp. 199–207).

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Rivers, Kimberly A., *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice: Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Sermo, 4), Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; hardback; pp. xvii, 377; 4 b/w illustrations, 2 b/w line art; R.R.P. €70.00; ISBN 9782503515250.

This book examines memory, which, since the influential studies by Frances Yates and Mary Carruthers, has been a familiar subject to medievalists, and preaching in the Middle Ages. Kimberly Rivers's stated aims are to demonstrate the integral role of memory and mnemonic technique in medieval preaching across Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, and in so doing to provide a chronology for the development of mnemonic techniques in the Middle Ages.

The book is divided into three parts. The first and most complex section deals with the medieval sources of mnemonic techniques. This includes discussions of both monastic meditative *memoria* and scholastic memory in the twelfth century, when the pressure to absorb more and more information stimulated the recovery and development of ancient memory methods. For example, the Augustinian Hugo of St Victor, practised *collectio* and *divisio*,

derived from Quintilian, which involved organizing or classifying material into digestible, more memorable parts, in addition to using mental images of *locus* or place to aid recall, a technique also used in antiquity.

In the thirteenth century, the new mendicant orders had a clear need for mnemonic strategies, and Rivers shows how both the Dominicans and the Franciscans used and developed memory techniques for oratory. The Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 88–85 BC), out of favour since the fourth century, was revived by Dominicans such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. This tract emphasized the placing of textual images of striking, memorable things (rather than words) within logically ordered mental *loci* as a method for remembering.

Rivers argues that while Franciscan and Dominican sermon mnemonics had much in common, Franciscan practice was distinctive in that it employed mental images drawn from the meditative spiritual exercises of the Order. In their writings, Franciscans Guibert of Tournai and David von Augsburg both advocate the order and discipline of meditation as a means of focusing on the ‘memory of the benefits of God’. For example, a mental image of the Passion or virtues will serve to drive images of vice from the memory. Structure is provided by other images such as a ladder, used to create a clear path through otherwise distracted thoughts, each rung representing increasing illumination.

The second part of the book is a discussion of how the preacher’s memory was constructed. Rivers draws on *Ars praedicandi* treatises, in particular that by fourteenth-century Franciscan, Catalan Francesc Eiximenis, evidently the only work to give specific advice to preachers for remembering sermons. Francesc is strictly pragmatic in that he follows no particular system other than what works to encourage recall. His techniques include ordering in numbers (Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Seven virtues and vices), bringing to mind a similitude (such as a crucifix that signifies the Passion), and mapping, in order, the things to be remembered on an imagined road or path.

While order was often seen to be more important than imagery, it was recognized that mental pictures greatly aided recall, and preachers used imagery in their sermons in the form of stories or *exempla*. While these were expected to have the authority of scripture, the fourteenth-century English ‘classicising friars’ (as first named by Beryl Smalley), also employed moralized verbal pictures or *picturae* of gods and goddesses, as well as virtues and vices. These personifications were equipped with various attributes, the more bizarre the better for remembrance. For example, Neptune, also identified as *Intelligentia* is described in Ridevall’s *Fulgentius metaforalis* as ‘Horned, despoiled of riches, aided by the Harpies, lofty in stature and weighty in size,

white haired, crowned with salt, sceptered with a trident, married to the Styx' (p. 219). Order and structure were provided by imagining the *picturae* placed in a *locus* such as a castle or ship or along the parts of the human body such as the fingers of a hand.

The third part of the book describes the spread of classicizing mnemonic exempla throughout Europe. In France, *picturae* were promoted in works by Pierre Besuire and Jean de Hesdin for use by preachers and university students. *Picturae* were also very popular in Germany and Central Europe, in works such as the sermon collection *Dormi secure* by German friar Johannes von Werden, the full title of which reassures the preacher that he can 'sleep securely' in the knowledge his sermon has already been written.

Rivers's important new contributions to the study of medieval mnemonics include her analysis of Franciscan mnemonics and its practitioners, and she paves the way for future research, for example on the memory techniques of Italian Dominicans and the relationship between textual memory images and manuscript illumination. While the chronological approach allows for a valuable overview of a complex subject, the book is perhaps overly ambitious in scope. Although summaries of the argument appear throughout, rather in the style of *collectio* and *divisio*, the impression remains that there is ample material for at least two books.

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Ruderman, David B., *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010; cloth; pp. 336; 5 maps; R.R.P. US\$35.00, £24.95; ISBN 9781400834693.

From the outset, I should like to explain that I am not writing this review of Professor Ruderman's book as someone at all expert on his subject area, but as someone eager to learn more about it. And this readable study has certainly not disappointed me.

In a way I find it easiest to start my discussion where Ruderman ends it, namely with what he has to say about the term 'Early Modern'. He discusses the problems associated with that very well, in my view, concluding: 'Put simply, early modernity [as a label] betrays its indebtedness to a flawed theory of modernization and thus the term, employed literally, is misleading. Only as a conventional and neutral label referring to a period between medieval and modern, and implying nothing more, might the historian cautiously employ the term' (p. 226). Where many writing about the 'Early Modern' period

have ideological axes to grind, Ruderman aims to offer a sober and factual account. His book differs, however, from that of his major predecessor, Jonathan Israel, whose *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750*, which appeared in 1985, by Ruderman's own admission 'marked a significant moment in the emergence of this field' (p. 207). As Ruderman sees it, Israel's work would have us believe that Jewish intellectual history is 'essentially derivative'. In Israel's view, Ruderman states, it generally represents a Jewish version of a universal European trend, while in its own terms and in its engagement with its own tradition and intellectual past, it exhibits little intrinsic significance. Ruderman regards such a view as 'only partial', and he aims to offer a 'corrective' that, in effect, concentrates more on *Jewish* history (pp. 212–14).

It appears to me that he succeeds to a remarkable extent, although occasionally he might perhaps have related matters more to the overall European context than he does. However, it is valuable to have so much informative and probing material about Jewish history during the period assembled, and it will be possible for other scholars to establish such links as they see.

By specifically concentrating on a very thorough study of Jewish history rather than anything more broad, Ruderman in fact achieves a great deal of interest. As he suggests, one result of his study is to 'undermine once and for all a view long entrenched in modern Jewish historiography of an inevitable one-dimensional and one-directional path from servitude to emancipation, from communal solidarity to disintegration, from ghettoization to citizenship, and from a normative tradition to radical assimilation' (p. 204). Indeed, one thing that stands out for me after reading this book is the complexity of the history dealt with. From a contemporary point of view, and as someone writing in Australia, where many live who would see themselves as having something like a 'dual identity', I was particularly interested in Ruderman's descriptions of what this meant for Jews who in one way or another saw themselves, and/or were seen by others, as being both Jewish and 'something else'.

Let me consider as an example what he says about 'The Ambiguity of Converso Lives'. *Conversos* (Spanish and Portuguese for 'converts') were those Jews who had become Christians, particularly, and usually as a result of pressure, during the two centuries preceding the Alhambra Decree of 1492 whereby all Jews who were not, or did not become, Christians, were expelled from Spain by that country's Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. (Ruderman sees 1492 as in essence the starting point of his period.) *Conversos* were in a very unusual position, not least if they chose to leave Spain. Ruderman makes such interesting observations as the following: 'For New

Christians who fully returned to Judaism, their rite of passage was neither simple nor complete. They retained consciously or unconsciously deeply ingrained attitudes to and associations with their distant past, both religious notions and ethnic loyalties that in most cases they could not dislodge' (p. 160). Also: 'The new Jewish identity of the conversos, whether leaning toward Jewish or back toward Christian orthodoxy or wavering between the two poles, was unique because it was based on choice, on personal autonomy' (p. 161). The 'choice' was, however, fraught with difficulty, and some *conversos* 'even returned to the Iberian Peninsula, where they felt more comfort and familiarity despite the hostile conditions that had initially precipitated their previous departures' (p. 163).

Ruderman has much of value and interest to say about five crucial characteristics that he sees as uniting early modern Jewish communities. One characteristic is a new mobility increasing social interaction throughout Europe, both between Jews and Jews and non-Jews. Further, there was increased communal cohesion in Jewish settlements that revealed the rising power of lay oligarchies. Additionally, a knowledge explosion occurred which was brought about by the printing press and developments in learning and education. As well, the period witnessed a crisis of rabbinic authority, and last but not least there was a blurring of religious identities.

As an interested reader, I much enjoyed and admired this book, and it seems to me a very worthwhile addition to the study of early modern history, not least as result of its concentration on the history of one particular group of people found in more than one country.

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Seymour, Michael C., ed., *The Egerton Version of Mandeville's Travels* (Early English Text Society, O. S. 336), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010; hardback; pp. xxx, 230; 2 colour plates; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9780199591060.

While every noun and adjective of the phrase 'The True Story of Sir John Mandeville's Travels' is questionable, yet this fourteenth-century travel book has been immensely popular from the very beginning. There are over 300 manuscripts and countless editions: Wynkyn de Worde printed two editions in 1495 and 1499. The *Travels* captured the European imagination and between them, Marco Polo and Mandeville dominated European views of the rest of the world for centuries.

Seymour has dedicated much of his life to the principal English manuscripts of the *Travels* which he surveyed in 'The English manuscripts of *Mandeville's Travels*' (Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions, 4.5 (1966) 167–210). He has now edited the four fundamental ones, including the Defective Manuscript (so-called because it lacks the description of Egypt), the Metrical Version, and the one from the Cotton manuscript, which happens to be a better version than the Egerton one. All have been published by the Early English Text Society.

The present manuscript is the one used by Malcolm Letts for his modernized English version of *Mandeville's Travels* (Hakluyt 2nd series, vol. CI, London, 1953). For anyone who only wants to know the story, then this is the one to read, even though Seymour's latest version does contain annotations identifying various places and peoples mentioned in the text that update the notes in his earlier editions. The problem with Seymour's notes is that some annotations are longer while others are shorter, and it is nowhere made clear what improvements or decisions have been made for this version or how views have changed over the years. There are also points in the commentary that are not well addressed, for example Seymour's dismissal of Mandeville on Caesar's adjustment of the calendar (see pp. 43 and 183). Caesar did indeed add two months to a year (46 BC), but it was only one year, and that was to put the calendar back in kilter. Mandeville thinks he added two months to every year, which is an understandable mistake. Seymour, however, says Mandeville miscalculates rather than misunderstands.

Students of Middle English language, on the other hand, will enjoy the painstaking transcription by Seymour. As I have not seen the original, I cannot vouch for the accuracy, apart from a short comparison with the two very welcome coloured frontispieces of fols 45 and 59 (verso). The transcription could also be useful, and certainly entertaining, for students: it is undoubtedly much easier to read than, for example, Chaucer's verse. Reading out loud is the natural way to hear such works. Of course, the mismatch between the Roman alphabet (even expanded by þ and ȝ) and the various versions of English pronunciation, with the consequent variations in spelling, will cause some problems. The spelling does, however, reveal the dialect used for this text as probably being from North Yorkshire, but Seymour has changed his assessment of the script from early fifteenth century *cursiva libraria* (p. 199) to *anglicana formata* hand c. 1400 (p. xxvii). Otherwise his description of the manuscript is virtually unchanged, though his variations in the transcription of the note from 1803, found in the front of the manuscript, are a little disconcerting. It seems a shame that he does not include the exotic alphabets transcribed in the manuscript, apart from the one included in a frontispiece.

So this text completes a life work of Seymour: the corpus of transcriptions of the basic English versions of Mandeville. Unfortunately (or should that be 'fortunately' in terms of future research?) it leaves many questions unanswered or resuscitated. This is not helped by the unreflective way in which Seymour approaches his task. Though he mentions his other versions, there is only a very limited attempt at correlation, illustrated by just a few passages.

This is certainly a fun text for students of Middle English in terms of learning the language, and scholars will be pleased to have this final volume of Seymour's *Mandevilles*. It does provide adequate notes on both interpretation and language to stimulate further work, but for those who simply want the basic story, Letts's Hakluyt version remains the basic source.

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Silver, Larry and Jeffrey Chipps **Smith**, eds, *The Essential Dürer*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010; cloth; pp. 304; 88 illustrations; R.R.P. US\$55.00, £36.00; ISBN 9780812241877.

As might be expected of a publication co-edited by someone of Larry Silver's standing, *The Essential Dürer* is a flawlessly presented volume consisting of twelve essays, with unimpeachable scholarly references for the vast literature on one of the most important artists of the Renaissance. Ten years in the making, and with contributing authors participating in an academic workshop in Williamstown, the chapters are of a consistently high standard in proposing judicious interpretations of Dürer's art and writing, and are coordinated to cover vast areas of his life and work without much overlapping. The editors have decided not to introduce the volume with the standard information on Dürer's origins and training, details of which are dispersed throughout the chapters. Rather, Corine Schleif addresses the artist's biography in depth towards the end of the book in her fascinating discussion of Dürer's relationship with his wife, viewed in particular through the prism of his correspondence with his patrician friend Willibald Pirckheimer. After the Preface, the first chapter deals with Dürer's work as a draughtsman, followed by chapters on his prints, paintings, relationship to sculpture, trips to Italy and the Netherlands, princely patronage, experience of, and response to, the Reformation, a case study of his iconography, and the critical reception and appropriation of his legacy for better and worse over the course of the twentieth century.

This medium-size volume is seemingly not intended for the general reader – inasmuch as the illustrations are small, few in number, and all in black and white, and the language is academic – but neither does it appear to be aimed at a specialist audience. It does not highlight the presentation of new primary evidence, and there does not appear to be a lot. There are no new documents concerning Dürer's life or social context, no new attributions of drawings or paintings, and no new identifications of states of his prints. Instead, there is a series of newly crafted discussions of the artist's life and work, couched in consistently cautious language and admitting to the open-endedness of much art-historical interpretation.

With nearly a sixth of the volume consisting of endnotes, the reader is provided with a comprehensive guide to the literature. These essays seem ideally suited to undergraduate level study, and no doubt chapters will be added to reading lists in art history and history courses for years to come, and deservedly so. Students will be able to debate the authors' interpretations, or contend with their presentation of them.

There is a tendency to over-pitch certain arguments, perhaps in response to the enormity of Dürer's legacy. Christiane Andersson and Larry Silver's chapter states that before the late fifteenth century, 'drawing had mostly served a subsidiary function as studies for works in other media, such as designs for sculpture, stained glass, tapestries, goldsmith's work, or paintings. Around the year 1500 in Germany, drawing emerged as an autonomous art form, one of the crucial milestones in the history of the medium and a development in which Dürer played a major role'. This is a big claim, but one belied by the *Florentine Picture Chronicle* and Marco Zoppo's *Rosebery Album* (both British Museum, London), datable to the third quarter of the fifteenth century and consisting of a series of highly finished drawings evidently intended for educated, humanist patrons rather than their artists' own workshop purposes.

Katherine Crawford Luber's chapter on Dürer's paintings is more a discussion of his underdrawing practice as revealed by infrared reflectography, and where she writes that the 'study of technique, encompassing the procedures utilized and adapted by artists at every step in the production of a work of art, has been largely overlooked as a source of material for the art historian committed to the reconstruction and interpretation of the past' one wonders what the many authors of the 'Primitifs Flamands' *Corpus* volumes on early Netherlandish painting would say if they could, given that conservation evidence has been routinely discussed in these publications for nearly sixty years now.

Is it also difficult to agree with Keith Moxey when he writes in his essay on the appropriation of Dürer's legacy in twentieth-century Germany: 'The

structural relation of art historians to the past seems markedly different from that of other historians. Rather than depending on documentary traces located in archives, the art historian confronts images that have been invested with power both in the past and the present'. At a time when interdisciplinarity is at the forefront of so much scholarship, it seems a little old-fashioned to insist on a distinction between the art historian and other kinds of historian, and to deny the significance of documents in any branch of historical enquiry is unsettling. Doubtless, others will find much to admire, and some things to question in this impressive volume.

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Sinha, Prashant K. and Mohini **Khot**, eds, *Vintage Shakespeare*, Jaipur, Book Enclave, 2010; hardback; pp. 240; R.R.P. Rs.750.00; ISBN 9788181522719.

Vintage Shakespeare is an essay collection arising from an international seminar organized by the Shakespeare Society of India with support from the British Council. A collaboration between Shakespeare scholars from India and elsewhere, the volume provides new perspectives on the plays written in Shakespeare's middle phase. As the editors, Prashant K. Sinha and Mohini S. Khot observe, despite the vast volumes of scholarship on the middle phase of Shakespeare's work, happily there is more to be said and this work contributes to the ongoing dialogue.

Shakespeare is a significant aspect of Indian intellectual and theatrical culture. In the introduction, the editors provide a brief history of Shakespeare in performance in India beginning with William Monckton's production of *The Tempest* in Calcutta in the 1780s and nineteenth-century school productions of *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The plays have been translated into Hindi, Sanskrit, and regional languages; in Bharatendu Harishchandra's *Durlabh Bandhu* (1888), an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*, the Christian-Jewish division was changed to a Hindu-Jain conflict. There have also been various film productions, including Sohrab Modi's *Hamlet* (*Khoon ka Khoon* 1935) and A. V. Annadurai's *Antony and Cleopatra* (*Nallathambi* 1949).

The essays are written from a variety of theoretical perspectives and grouped loosely by play, concerned predominantly with *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. Some of the essays bring new perspectives to well-established ideas. S. Viswanathan revisits the political metaphor of the king's two bodies,

first outlined by Ernst Kantorowicz, in looking at *Hamlet* and *Lear*, exploring what effect this idea has in the two plays. Dorothea Kehler, adding to feminist perspectives on Shakespeare character studies, brings new insights to the sororicidal rivalry of Regan and Goneril. Another interesting essay is R. W. Desai's tracing of what he perceives to be Shakespeare's ambivalence towards his own profession.

Other essays extend previous research interests in new directions. R. S. White's essay continues his interest in tracing pacifist voices across Shakespeare's genres; here he asks whether some of Shakespeare's plays as a whole can be seen as anti-war and he considers *Henry V* and *Troilus and Cressida*. White argues that *Troilus and Cressida* can be read and performed as an example of Shakespeare's condemnation of the unjust war. He emphasizes the 'polyvocal and radical ambiguity of Shakespeare's dramatic designs' (p. 15), which enable multiple readings and enable pacific arguments to be discerned alongside ideas of 'war as the logical extension of national aspirations'. He firstly considers how *Henry V* does not condemn war yet manifests a discernible vein of resistance to war; then suggests that in *Troilus and Cressida*, in depicting the Greek-Trojan conflict, Shakespeare had greater freedom to pitch anti-war material without the political risk, and that the play cannot be easily read as an endorsement of war.

A highlight of the volume is the essay by Professor S. Nagarajan, to whom the volume is dedicated. In a fascinating study he explores the tragic effect in *Lear* in the light of the Indian theory of *rasa*, which translates as 'juice' or 'essence', and which emphasizes the renunciation of the ego: '*Rasa* is our response to a work of art which is free from the individual and personal dimension. Our response to an experience of life is often characterised by relating it to ourselves. However, our response to a work of art is free from this characteristic' (p. 159). He outlines a history of the theory of *rasa*, beginning with the basic text of Sanskrit poetics concerning drama and the dance, *Satya Sastra* of Bharata (3rd century BCE). According to the theory there is a *rasa* corresponding to each of the eight primary emotions: *srīngara* (love or *rati*); *hasya* (the humorous or *hasya*); *karuna* (the compassionate; grief or *soka*); *raudra* (the angry, *krodha*); *veera* (heroic or energetic, *utsaha*); *adbhuta* (the marvellous, *vismaya*); *bhayanaka* (fear or *bhaya*); the horrific (the disgusting, *jugupsa*) (p. 160). He identifies the dominant *rasa* of *Lear* as *karuna* or compassion (corresponding to the basic emotion *soka*, grief). Nagarajan considers the ending of *Lear* as presenting a state of the cessation of desire leading to peace/tranquility (*santa*), often considered the ninth *rasa*. He sees *Lear* as revealing human capacity through suffering to achieve *santa*, transcending the pain and pleasure of life.

Vintage Shakespeare is a welcome collaboration between Shakespeare scholars from India and others from the international community. A couple of the essays suffer from aiming too broadly in their subject matter or from their brevity, but this is a minor quibble. There is something of value in all of the essays and the volume is a worthy addition to the sea of Shakespeare criticism.

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Svensson, Eva, *The Medieval Household: Daily Life in Castles and Farmsteads: Scandinavian Examples in their European Context* (The Medieval Countryside, 2), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; cloth, pp. xvi, 381; 73 b/w figures, 17 colour plates; R.R.P. €55.00; ISBN 9782503525907.

The title of this interesting book is misleading. Rather than covering Scandinavia, the focus is on Sweden, and not all of Sweden but excavations of four medieval settlements, one farmstead, one hamlet, and two castles, in the western region of Värmland. Nevertheless, Eva Svensson admirably succeeds in placing her Scandinavian examples in their European context and in the process produces some intriguing comparisons and conclusions. As a result, medieval scholars, even those with little interest in Scandinavia/Sweden/Värmland, will find much in this book to ponder. Svensson is no armchair historian; her book is a result, in her words (p. 30), 'of my own exposure to [archaeological] material at various excavations performed in all types of weather including extreme Swedish winter conditions'.

The chapters in Part I provide a comparative introduction to Swedish society in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Svensson explains, for example, that serfdom never occurred in Sweden, peasants owned property, and they in consequence held a strong social position when compared to peasants elsewhere in Europe.

Parts II and III form the core of the book and analyse the results of the excavations at the farmstead of Skinnerud, the hamlet of Skramle, and the castles of Saxholmen and Edsholm. To provide some order to the abundant artefact material, Svensson divides it into thirteen groups: handicraft, trade, home furnishing, housekeeping including table manners and cooking, clothing and personal adornment, building activity, animal rearing, hunting and fishing, agriculture, popular belief, military objects, administration, and leisure. For the farmstead and the hamlet, agricultural infield land was limited, so both made extensive use of the outland, which provided not only resources for

survival but also opportunities for commerce through activities such as iron and tar production, hunting, and the provision of raw materials. Both castles had relatively short existences: Saxholmen was built in the middle of the thirteenth century and abandoned around 1300, while Edsholm was probably built in the 1360s or 1370s and destroyed by fire during a revolt in 1434. In contrast to the peasant interaction with the surrounding landscape, the inhabitants of the castles were segregated from it. Their fortifications were in a certain sense their own prisons.

In Part IV, Svensson notes that these four settlements were located on the geographic periphery or margins of Europe. For the purposes of comparison she selected fifteen similar archaeological sites in northern Europe – three each from Britain, the Netherlands and Germany, two from Switzerland, and four from the Czech Republic – totalling seven castles and eight rural settlements. Spatially, the European castles were separate but not remote: they were built on higher ground but were near a town or a trade route. Swedish castles were much more remote as well as much less comfortable. Nonetheless, the castles in both areas shared many similarities, giving the impression that ‘the builders were reading the same manual’ (p. 340). Rural settlements also had similar features, the foremost being the long building or hall that dominated villages and functioned as a meeting place. In both areas, animals and humans had separate buildings.

More surprising was the discovery that the inhabitants of the Swedish periphery owned items of clothing and personal adornment that were equal, if not superior, to anything owned by the Europeans. On the other hand, the Swedes had a simpler diet. Barley, oats, wheat, and rye were the dominant cereal crops in both areas, but the Europeans ate fruit, peas, nuts, and other vegetables, all of which did not appear at the Swedish sites. The most common meat in Europe was cattle, followed by sheep/goats and pigs, while in Sweden it was sheep/goats followed by cattle.

Svensson’s acknowledgements do not mention any help putting the book into English, so I surmise that the prose belongs to the author. The book reads very well, better than books by authors whose native language is English. I found only a few mistakes: Swedish farmers sewed rather than sowed their fields (p. 27). The worst feature of the book is the absence of an index. Nonetheless, the book is an impressive achievement.

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Tambling, Jeremy, *Dante in Purgatory: States of Affect* (Disputatio, 18), Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; hardback; pp. ix, 292; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503531298.

Jeremy Tambling's volume provides a compelling focus on a complex and intriguing aspect of human experience, i.e. the study of affective states. Viewing Dante's poetic output through the lens of emotion, Tambling explores the myriad ways in which Dante represents the subjective self in his fictional *schema* of the afterlife. While *Dante in Purgatory* is primarily centred on the poet's representation of affective states through the figures located in the second canticle, the discussion also incorporates examples from both the *Comedy* and a selection of the poet's minor works (*Convivio*, *Monarchia*, and the *Rime*).

In the course of reflecting on historical conceptions of the emotional life, in contrast to our contemporary reading of affective states, Tambling acknowledges that Dante's depiction of emotional states in the *Purgatorio* is not always straightforward or easily captured but, rather, is undergoing a process of transformation. At the same time, Tambling draws the distinction between our contemporary understanding of affective states and the historic dialogue, articulated by scholars over the centuries, about the motivating forces that animate subjectivity and the development of states of affect.

In Dante's *Purgatory*, the exploration of affective states is evidenced in relation to the seven capital vices. Tambling argues that while Dante adheres to defined notions of emotional states in some instances in the poem, in others he captures a shifting, metamorphic quality, one that is not readily definable.

The notion of transience is particularly suited to the second otherworldly realm, where the purgatorial souls are undergoing a transitional spiritual journey. According to Tambling's assessment of the affective representation of the contrite souls in Dante's *Purgatory*: 'the possibility of completeness of definition, or assessment of any affective state, has been taken away: states are in excess of what can be held to account, or even confessed. The text's 'modern' quality, in contrast to its ordered medievalism, lies in its extraordinarily engaged attention to such double and shifting states of affect' (p. 263).

The author makes connections with the influential thinkers of the past and present, starting with a discussion of the meanings of emotion and passion as depicted through the ages by Aristotle, Augustine, Heidegger, and others, and then tracing the psychoanalytical understanding of affect as expressed, for example, by Otto Rank, Sigmund Freud, and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen. This historicization of emotion provides a solid grounding for the author's

conceptualization of Dante's scheme of affective states traced through the cardinal vices.

Commencing with the eight temptations (or *logismoi*) identified by Evagrius of Pontus (the Latin equivalents are *gula*, *luxuria*, *avaritia*, *tristitia*, *ira*, *acedia*, *vana Gloria*, and *superbia*), Tambling considers the codification undertaken by Gregory the Great who reduced the eight temptations to seven cardinal sins (or 'tendencies' as they are called on p. 31). In the analysis of the portrayal of vices and virtues that are enacted on the purgatorial cornices, the author provides a synthetic review of the philosophical, biblical, doctrinal, classical, and literary sources from which Dante drew inspiration for his dramatic representations of individual passions, with avarice identified as 'the predominant negative emotion' (p. 195).

Interwoven among the textual exemplars, *Dante in Purgatory* also offers an illuminating survey of visual representations of vices, for example, in the discussion of Giotto's noteworthy public representation of virtues and vices in the famous Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. In this section, the exploration of the dramatic figure of Envy, who is depicted as a snake-tongued woman (p. 83), is particularly of interest. Similarly, the discussion of the Siren in Chapter 8 is informative and perceptive. Analysing the visual images witnessed by the protagonist Dante as he ascends the cornices of the mountain of Purgatory, Tambling makes the following observation: '[i]n implying an art of the fragment, rendering not a whole but cinders, an art which calcinates, Dante's work brings out the power of death' (p. 95).

In the final chapter, concerning the enigmatic figure of Matelda, Tambling explores the themes of love, narcissism, and fragmentation in relation to the protagonist Dante. He reminds the reader that the experience of passing through fire is 'the most intense experiencing of an affective state' (p. 245) and how the meeting with Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise reverses Dante's 'narcissistic expectations' and produces 'mourning and the need to confess' (p. 262).

There is much in this volume to sustain the interest of a variety of readers, whether from a literary, philosophical, historical, or psychoanalytical point of view. Tambling's volume provides a thoroughly engaging examination of states of affect and how the poet Dante presents the inner life in powerful new ways.

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Treharne, Elaine and Greg **Walker**, eds, with the assistance of William Green, *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010; cloth; pp. xiv, 774; 7 b/w illustrations (maps); R.R.P. US\$ 150.00, £85.00; ISBN 9780199229123.

Weighing in at one and a half kilograms, this substantial volume is not a handbook in the literal sense, but it fulfils many of the other requirements of the manual for guidance in a particular area. Besides Elaine Treharne's useful prologue, 'Speaking of the Medieval', which opens to scrutiny the continuities and changes of the long period from Old to Early Modern English, and Greg Walker's epilogue on the large question of when the medieval period ended, there are thirty-five scholarly essays, not all of which can be examined here. Aiming to cover 'key themes' (p. v), they are grouped in fives under the capacious and permeable headings, 'Literary Production', 'Literary Consumption', 'Literature, Clerical and Lay', 'Literary Realities', 'Complex Identities', 'Literary Place, Space, and Time', 'Literary Journeys'. An Index of Manuscripts, and a substantial general Index follow. The last has two entries, not cross-referenced, to Brunetto Latini (first and surname), both including Latini's *Trésor*, but giving different page numbers.

Most of the essays are authoritative, yet also fresh and thought provoking. Some, such as Nicholas Perkins's 'Writing, Authority and Bureaucracy', Ralph Hanna's 'Literature and the Cultural Elites', and Thomas Bredehoft's 'The Gothic Turn and Twelfth-Century Chronicles', are innovative, in interpretation, material, and approach. A few, such as Nicola McDonald's on the primer, and Bella Millet's on the English sermon before 1250, draw helpful attention to understudied yet essential topics. Others, among them Gillian Rudd's 'Metaphorical and Real Flowers in Medieval Verse' and Alcuin Blamires's 'Individuality', offer alternative and recuperative readings.

A. S. G. Edwards's 'Books and Manuscripts' is a highly competent opening to Part I. The chapter introduces core information on the co-existence of print, manuscript, and oral transmission; surveys the functions (administrative, literary, devotional) and locations of these activities (with reference to the most important productions), and examines the patterns of commercialization. There are brief footnotes in this essay (as in others) and a useful self-contained bibliography appended. (Not here, but in essays of others, there are a few footnotes without a corresponding bibliography entry, such as 'Treharne 2003', p. 5 and 'Pettit 1984', p. 380.) In 'Textual Copying and Transmission', Orietta da Rold takes an unusually direct look at manuscript-making processes and the agencies involved, which is extended

in Simon Horobin's lucid 'The Professionalization of Writing' and Elizabeth Evenden's informative 'The Impact of Print ... 1476–1575'.

Within Part II, Siân Echard's 'Insular Romance' addresses the central matter of the non-English origins for works 'en romanz', and the generic difficulties of the term. John McGavin's 'Performing Communities: Civic Religious Drama' looks at both medieval performers and, especially, medieval spectators, pointing out most perceptively (via town records and the play texts themselves) the interdependencies in public community contexts over time. This is matched by Elisabeth Dutton's 'Secular Medieval Drama' (Part IV), which discusses carefully the lack of sharply defined boundaries between the dominating religious drama and the secular productions that began in the 1490s, then developed into the household dramas of the Tudor period.

In Part III, Andrew Galloway's 'Visions and Visionaries', benefits from the *Handbook's* removal of the tight time-limits often given to the term 'Medieval', considering with illuminating amplitude the possibilities of the long and varying tradition of dream works, literary and non-literary.

The topics of medieval individuality, autobiography, representation of identity (in terms of authority, race, religion, politics reputation, common or singular good, social status, nationality), occupy the authors of Part V, beginning with the wide and informed sweep of Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's 'Authority, Constraint, and the Writing of the Medieval Self'. Two essays, Kathy Lavezzo's and Samantha Zacher's, are concerned with the ambivalent presentation of Saracens and Jews in medieval literary texts; Jacqueline Stodnick's explores how 'Emergent Englishness' might be related to more than a New Israel.

Helen Fulton's broad yet subtle study, 'Regions and Communities', opening Part VI, is given additional shading in the following surveys, 'London Literature' (Alison Wiggins), and 'Reading Communities' (Wendy Scase). Regions are further considered in Elizabeth Elliott's 'Scottish Writing' and Thorlac Turville-Petre's stimulating 'Places of the Imagination'.

A tightly knit set of essays in Part VII covers travel writing of all kinds, encompassing the medieval exotic, origin myths, and medieval world margins. In several, Mandeville's *Book* has a significant role; in Alfred Hiatt's, maps are included, so that medieval thinking on traditional boundaries is presented, most usefully, in a form other than, yet explicatory of, the literary text.

For its care to provide highly competent yet invigorating approaches to the riches of medieval literature in English, the *Handbook* is highly recommended.

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Wells, Robin Headlam, *Shakespeare's Politics: A Contextual Introduction*, London, New York, Continuum, 2009; paperback; pp. xii, 234; R.R.P. A\$48.00; ISBN 9780826493064.

As Robin Headlam Wells states plainly in the opening sentence of *Shakespeare's Politics*, an updated and expanded version of his *Shakespeare, Politics and the State*, '[t]his book is about political ideas in Shakespeare's plays'. The book is not, however, about Shakespeare's own political views, although many critics tie Shakespeare's beliefs to the opinions that his various characters express, especially to Ulysses' long speech about hierarchical order in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Rather, *Shakespeare's Politics* explains the political issues current in Shakespeare's day and the causes for the dissension that raged concerning many aspects of life. Wells argues that this dissension was the result of religious rather than class divides. He sees Henry VIII's Reformation of religious life in the 1530s as the key to understanding the 'radically divided society', which persisted for the next century (p. 4). Like other Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, Shakespeare wrote about forms of government, including the power of the crown, rebellion, 'the rights of subjects and the responsibilities of rulers' (p. 4), and Wells uses passages from contemporary documents to expand the reader's understanding of these issues. Some of these would have been available to Shakespeare and used by him, but some not. According to Wells, Shakespeare's 'open-ended plays ... are more to do with debating questions of governance than they are with endorsing or subverting a supposed tyrannical regime' (pp. 204–05).

Even the different positions held in the debate on gender, Wells claims, have a religious connection. Women's nature and their role in life was 'one of the great debating topics of the age' (p. 81). While the subordinate position of women was preached from every pulpit, and some Puritan clerics were particularly outspoken about subjugating women, anti-misogynists asserted their equality with men. Wells shows that 'with the romantic comedies Shakespeare's apparent acceptance of conventional Elizabethan sexual politics gives way to a more critical view' as he creates heroines who are superior to their lovers, 'more astute and more resourceful (p. 47). Despite this, by the end of each play, it is still a patriarchal society in which the characters dwell.

This debate about gender concerned itself with masculinity as well as femininity. Whether masculine characteristics 'traditionally associated with the military profession' (p. 42) were suitable attributes in political leaders or whether in their aggression they posed a threat to a stable society was the subject of heated debate. Shakespeare engages with the ideal of the

warrior hero class while, at the same time, undercutting it. Wells discussed this at length in an earlier book, *Shakespeare on Masculinity*. Here he relates Shakespeare's military characters to 'the deep divisions in Parliament, the Privy Council and even the royal family' caused by this debate and he offers documents that shed light on the parties to the dispute (p. 62). King James, in his pacifism, for example, is likened to Orpheus (p. 60), while the Roman playwright Seneca's comparison of Orpheus to Hercules is then relevant, in Wells's gracefully written argument, as 'the Orpheus story was interpreted as ... an allegory of the civilizing power of the liberal arts' (p. 59). Shakespeare's Othello is an example of a flawed military figure, while 'Coriolanus forms a part of the public debate' (p. 58). Wells argues that when Prospero says, 'The rarer action is | In virtue than in vengeance' (*The Tempest*, v.i.27–28) he is 'in effect redefining masculine virtue' (p. 61) from that of the Herculean hero, for whom 'virtue means military valour', to forgiveness and the attributes associated with the liberal arts.

In other chapters, Wells shows that some of the issues that exercise our minds today were exercising the minds of Shakespeare's contemporaries, even though they inhabited a very different mental world where religion and a belief in natural law, and hence hierarchical order, dominated many people's lives at every level of society. Then as now people wondered if a person's disposition was due to nature or nurture. Wells discusses Shakespeare's amplification of this dispute in *The Winter's Tale*.

The 'Claims and counter claims of modern criticism' are outlined by Wells, as he sees these as colouring our understanding of Shakespeare (p. 184). He refutes the claims of cultural materialists and new historicists who say it was they who, in the 1980s, introduced the idea of studying a Shakespearean play in its historical context. This had been done since 'the early decades of the last century' (p. 186), Wells argues. Despite this, he acknowledges the contribution that Theoretical Shakespeare criticism has made.

Shakespeare's Politics is an important contribution to studies of the political world of Shakespeare's plays, especially to the tragedies and the history plays but also touching on the comedies and late romances. It also makes a serious contribution to historical studies with its insightful view of the political issues that dominated life in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

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