

Reviews

Acta Sanctorum Database, Cambridge, Chadwyck-Healey 1999-2002; Web site and CD-ROM; RRP £28,000.

There is little need, for this review, to draw attention to the importance of the *Acta Sanctorum*. Its significance for research into almost every aspect of life for the first 1600 years of the Christian era is well recognized. It is a series of the first importance, not only for ecclesiastical study, but also for investigation into literature, society and culture from the end of the Apostolic period, through the Patristic and medieval periods, down to the Reformation. Directly and indirectly, it offers evidence in abundance about beliefs and values and practices from throughout the Christian world – not just the Latin and Western traditions.

The *Acta Sanctorum* was originally published by the Société des Bollandistes, in one of the longest running ventures in publishing history: the final volume (including the *Propylaeum* to December) appeared in 1940, almost exactly 300 years after the first volume in 1643. Given that timeframe, the speed with which the digitization has proceeded seems almost disrespectful (although the project is a little behind schedule); and, *a fortiori*, the speed and ease with which a reader can browse or search for information is positively indecent. But it is an indency much to be welcomed and acclaimed.

The electronic *Acta Sanctorum*, now almost complete, joins a substantial collection of electronic databases released by Chadwyck-Healey, including – of particular relevance here – the *Patrologia Latina*. In keeping with many of these databases, the *Acta* are available both on the World Wide Web and on CD-ROM. For those technically minded, the texts are encoded in SGML, and users can perform Boolean, proximity and truncation searches.

Some years ago, it was fashionable (if foolishly short-sighted) to predict the demise of the printed word. Databases such as these will never replace the printed text when one wishes simply to read a continuous passage, either for pleasure or for study. What they do provide, of course, are unparalleled opportunities to search across an entire database in ways that no individual reader could expect to do with the printed version. As such, they allow for accumulations and for comparisons of evidence that have so far not really been practicable.

In many ways, a database such as this stands or falls on two things: the accuracy of its texts, and the sophistication of its search engine. Typically, text-

based databases are created either by electronic scanning of original printed materials, or by ‘double-keying’ – essentially, a system of having two copy typists enter the same material, and then electronically comparing the results. Neither system can provide 100% accuracy, but both have accuracy rates in the high 90% range. Traditionally, Chadwyck-Healey have favoured the double-keying method, although in this case texts in languages other than Latin and Greek (such as Syriac, Coptic, Slavic and Celtic) have been scanned as images, which, of course, cannot be searched as text. The Greek text also cannot be searched on the Web version, although it can on the CD-ROM.

Chadwyck-Healey have ample experience in the design of the ‘user interface’ for searching, and this is as simple and intuitive to use as their previous publications. It allows for simple searches by keyword, title, or saint; and it allows for searching of the entire database, or limiting each search by, for example, gender or month (the publication follows the ecclesiastical calendar). As noted above, it also allows for more complex searches using Boolean or wildcard operators. One possible improvement that might be considered would be a ‘search within results’ function; in principle, a Boolean search should suffice, but in practice the additional function can be useful.

As with all searchable databases, there are a few trips and traps. In this case, the searchable text is Latin, and keywords or strings must be constructed accordingly. For example, the pamphlet accompanying the *Acta* advertises that a user might create his or her own anthology with a theme ‘such as dragon-slaying’. Offhand, I can’t think of a Latin term for dragon-slaying or dragon-slayer, but a little invention may suffice: one can perform a proximity search, looking for close occurrences of *draco* and *occidere*, or better still, for close occurrences of the truncated forms *drac** and *occid**. Add in a few more synonyms for *occidere* (perhaps not *jugulare* in this context) and there, indeed, is a dragon-slaying anthology.

A more serious trap is revealed through the Help function, where we are told that ‘the early printed volumes of *Acta Sanctorum* contain a number of typographical features that have been reproduced in *Acta Sanctorum Database*. Abbreviations are typically represented by a circumflex accent over a vowel; e.g. “s,ctum” for “Sanctum”, “seculor ” for “seculorum” ... you may have to include the abbreviated form as well as the full form in your search expression.’ Similarly, alternative spellings on i/j or u/v are both included, and searches need to take account of both forms.

Apart from the enormous value of the *Acta Sanctorum Database* itself,

there is the promise of greater things to come. When it is complete, it will be possible (for subscribers to both databases) to search this and the *Patrologia Latina* at the same time. That will offer an unparalleled opportunity to study the resources of both in a way that scholars of other generations could scarcely have dreamed of. In *The Discarded Image*, C. S. Lewis described ‘medieval man’ as ‘an organiser, a codifier, a builder of systems’ who ‘would most have admired the card index’ among modern inventions. He continues by noting ‘the tranquil, indefatigable, exultant energy of passionately systematic minds bringing huge masses of heterogeneous material into unity’. Whether Lewis is right or not does not matter here, but I suspect those same ‘passionately systematic minds’ would have been mightily impressed by the opportunity to bring huge masses of material, if not into unity, at least into view.

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Bissell, R. Ward, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art: Critical Reading and Catalogue Raisonné*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999; cloth and paper; pp. xxiv, 446; 257 b/w illustrations, 27 colour plates; RRP US\$39.95; ISBN 0271017872 (cloth), 0271021209 (paper).

The Artemisia phenomenon is one of the more remarkable and significant developments in recent ‘Old Master’ art history. Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c.1653) once seemed just one of the *Caravaggisti* labouring in the vineyard of European Baroque art, unusual only for her gender, still rare among artists of the era. But today she is a superstar, referred to by her first name, like Piero, Leonardo, Madonna, etc. Many scholars of the period now see her as a genuine rival for her contemporaries, even including Caravaggio himself: witness for example the comparison between his slightly insipid *Judith and Holofernes* (c.1599) and her much more dramatic versions of the same subject (c.1611-12 and c.1620). In these and many other depictions of powerful women from history, Artemisia spoke with a distinctly female voice, in an age when images of male aggression, by male artists, for male patrons, were clearly the norm.

A crucial aspect of Artemisia’s modern *fortuna* is that she is seen as standing for the whole category of early modern female artists and their struggle for recognition and equality (thus already by Germaine Greer in *The Obstacle Race*, 1979). This view was reinforced by Mary Garrard’s scholarly but equally

committed 1989 monograph, describing both Artemisia's life and imagery under the heading 'the image of the female hero'. Artemisia has also joined Caravaggio and Vermeer as seventeenth-century artists of interest to a wider (non-specialist) audience, evidenced by a recent crop of plays and historical novels, and a feature film, a rather saccharine account by French director Agnes Merlet (1998). A considerable part of her appeal (as with Caravaggio) is that her life was as dramatic as her art. At the age of 18, she was raped by another painter, and subsequently subjected by her outraged artist-father Orazio to a humiliating trial whose record survives. The fact that she overcame these obstacles, and the misogynist climate of her day, makes her long and successful career (in Rome, Florence, Naples, and London) all the more extraordinary.

R. Ward Bissell was in the vanguard of Gentileschi studies back in 1968, when he published a ground-breaking scholarly article on her work. Bissell has since written a monograph on Orazio Gentileschi (Penn State, 1981), and has continued to study Artemisia. So he is well placed to write this new book, whose core is a lengthy *catalogue raisonné*, that key element of the traditional art-historical repertoire. Here, it is of particular importance in securing for Artemisia a solid corpus of paintings (several of them formerly doubted or seen as Orazio's work). Through close argument and analysis, for example, Bissell confirms the authenticity and precocious date of Artemisia's first major work, a *Susanna and the Elders* (1610) which radically re-envisioned a theme typically used by male artists and patrons of the era as a thinly-veiled pretext for a perve (as Garrard observes). Bissell's text is also generally informative and constructive, and there is also a good selection of reproductions, including a number in good colour. But he sometimes gives the impression of building an art-historical sand-castle amidst the swirling tides of feminism, contemporary theory and the Artemisia phenomenon itself (especially in his final chapter, 'Myths, misunderstandings, and musings').

In this respect, the eminent American art-historian Richard Spear has written a more satisfying account, in his review essay on a decade of Artemisia literature, in the September 2000 issue of the *Art Bulletin*. Steering a sure path through some tricky material, Spear delivers thoughtful judgements on a wide range of opinions. Concerning recent theoretical readings by Mieke Bal and others, Spear is fairly harsh. Conversely, he is open to the imaginative possibilities of 'fictional' accounts, praising in particular Anna Banti's beautiful and influential 1947 novel (*Artemisia*, trans. Shirley D'Ardia Caracciolo, University of Nebraska Press, 1988), which foregrounds the complexity of writing

biography; for a stimulating recent discussion, see Susanna Scarparo, 'Artemisia: the Invention of a "Real" Woman', *Italica* 79.3 (2002), pp.305-20.

Spear is quite critical of Bissell's book, describing the writing as laborious, and pointing out rather unkindly that although the catalogue was '35 years in the making', the author still didn't manage to *see* some 11 of the 57 accepted works! Spear also notes some significant errors and omissions – and scholars should consult the review by Gianni Papi (*Burlington Magazine* cxlii, July 2000, pp. 450-53), for other revisions to Bissell's lists of accepted and rejected works. Like so much apparently firm scholarly ground, though, this is actually unstable territory, for Papi was one of the main contributors to the catalogue of the 1991 Artemisia exhibition in Florence, which Spear and others have criticized for its own limitations and arbitrary attributions.

The current fashion for Artemisia does have a downside. Some of the popular imaging of her life and art is clichéd (Spear and Scarparo both discuss rather snarly but apposite reviews of Merlet's film by Griselda Pollock, Garrard and others). There is also a real danger that excessive focus on Artemisia may hinder proper recognition of other neglected seventeenth-century artists, including other women. For instance, the career of Elisabetta Sirani may not be nearly as dramatic – although she did die tragically young – but she is also important to a full picture of the period (see for example Adelina Modesti, 'Elisabetta Sirani', in Delia Gaze (ed.), *Dictionary of Women Artists*, London & Chicago, Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997, vol.2, pp.1272-75).

Despite these quibbles, though, the Artemisia phenomenon offers art historians some important and stimulating lessons, which Bissell's book, for all its strengths, rather fails to register.

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Boyd, Patrick, *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's Comedy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; cloth; pp. x, 323; 2 b/w illustrations; RRP AUSS\$135.00; ISBN 052166067X.

It is difficult to decide upon the audience for this curious book, the third the author has 'devoted to the study of the interactions between Dante's poetry and thought' (p.ix). It attempts to indicate the principal authors, intellectual

procedures, major ideas and value-systems that influenced Dante in his *Comedy*, or are evident in that work. Thus, after an introduction which stresses, amongst other fairly elementary points, the unique nature of Dante's treatment of ethics – 'rich, rigorous and nuanced – far more so than anything taught in the schools or universities of the United Kingdom at the present time' (p.7) – part one covers the major Greek, Roman and patristic authors who influenced Dante, the *quaestio*-method of mature medieval scholasticism, and the scholastic divide-and-enumerate method of analysis (which occasions the two b/w illustrations of 'tree-divisions' of vices and virtues, reproduced in colour on the dust-jacket). There is much here that is merely descriptive and fairly elementary. Mature scholars would already be familiar with much of what Boyde tells us (if only from such fine books as M.D. Chenu's *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A.M. Landry and D. Hughes, Chicago: Regnery, 1964 – not mentioned in the bibliography or apparently used anywhere). Beginners would probably be better off poring over the Dorothy Sayers or Mark Musa Penguin versions of the *Comedy* itself, with their rich apparatus of notes and introductions, or else considering the use of an introductory textbook such as Anders Piltz, *The World of Medieval Learning* (trans. David Jones, Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1981).

Part two presents by selection and summary from Dante's works – with some reference to their background in Aristotle, the Bible and elsewhere – aspects of the 'content of [Dante's] ethical thought' (p. 77), with a brief introduction to some of the leading features of the medieval Christian value-system that Dante inherited. Again, I am not sure that the elementary reader would not be better advised to spend the time with Sayers or Musa, while the advanced reader will want a more sophisticated and comprehensive treatment of the topics selected (perhaps taking off from Étienne Gilson's answer to Mandonnet's *Dante le Théologien: Dante the Philosopher*, trans. David Moore, London: Sheed and Ward, 1948 – Boyde p. 306). The same goes for the presentation of courtly values in Dante ('gentilezza' and nobility – 'temperanza, fortezza, amore, cortesia' and 'lealtà'), though it is arresting to learn that 'Dido provides the model for Francesca, and Anchises for Cacciaguida' (p. 145).

Part three is a consideration of covetousness, pride and justice in Dante's *Rime*, *Convivio* and *Comedy*, and their backgrounds. It is here that Boyde imparts some valuable context for the several figures in the *Comedy* who illustrate the vices of covetousness and pride. The reader will find the material for a deepened response to such figures as Farinata degli Uberti, as well as insights into the

meaning of Justice, the system of ‘reward’ in the *Comedy* and the beatific ‘contentment’ each soul enjoys in the place assigned to them by God.

It is interesting to ponder the emphasis here upon the absence of chance and the presence of eternal law and order. Perhaps in this way Dante fulfilled his longing for a condition that he did not find on earth. It is to ‘justice understood as the rule of law (*lex/legis*) here on earth’ (p.208) to which Boyde then turns. What follows is a fine account of Dante’s ideas on law and justice, as expressed in the *Convivio*, the *Comedy*, the *Rime* and the *De monarchia*, contextualised and backgrounded from Greek mythology, Aristotle, Roman law, Aquinas and medieval Christianity generally. Boyde’s *expositio* is illuminating and highlights Dante’s texts at many arresting points, such as the figure of Rhipeus (Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.426-28 and *Par.* 19).

Part four is a case study of Ulysses (*Inf.* 26) and Dante the pilgrim. Beginning from such familiar topics as the burdensome nature of travel in the Middle Ages and the notion of life on earth as a kind of ‘alienatio’ from our true *patria* in heaven, Boyde takes us on a forty page journey around all the sources – classical and medieval – that might have influenced Dante or be relevant to our understanding of what he is doing in his love/hate account of Ulysses/Odysseus, whose ‘authenticated’ wanderings he ‘falsifies’ in a curious manner not fully explained by Boyde – though his hint ‘There but for the grace of God go I’ (p. 271) is a helpful one. If Circe’s realm can be equated with (Florentine) politics, in that Circe/Florence changes people into pigs, then Ulysses/Dante abandoned family to travel, in a solitary ship or with a small band, in pursuit of experience of the world and knowledge of human vices and worth (*Inf.* 26.91-102). Old and weary, they reached the limits of human experience or knowledge, but used their eloquence to press further on, both reaching in the end the mountain (of Purgatory – Boyde pp. 265ff, *Inf.* 26.133ff), Ulysses disappearing without trace (*Inf.* 26.142), Dante entering Paradise. For further ‘clarification’, if he or she can find it, the reader must be referred to Boyde’s own journey of knowledge.

In conclusion, this is a book that can obviously expand one’s knowledge of the *Divine Comedy* and its intellectual context and sources. Some will want to skip parts early on, others will wonder exactly where the discourse is leading them later on. It is a book Boyde no doubt enjoyed writing and his exposition has many homely analogies that suggest a real attempt to reach an audience unfamiliar with Dante scholarship and themes. It is an idiosyncratic effort, on the whole, but one informed by a rich knowledge of the *Divine Comedy* and

the results of a very thorough search through the relevant literature of the medieval and ancient past.

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Brown-Grant, Rosalind, *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 40), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; cloth; pp. 224; RRP AU\$140.00; ISBN 0521641942.

Rosalind Brown-Grant's study of Christine de Pizan's defence of women provides an overview of the most important prose works written by Christine as part of her project to create a textual representation of women different from that predominant in the works of medieval men. Brown-Grant begins with the debate over de Meun's additions to the *Romance of the Rose* and emphasises the connections between the concern that Christine shows for authorial responsibility and her objections to the representation of women as immoral, lustful and untrustworthy, characteristic of the *Rose*. This chapter serves to introduce Christine's own method which is explicitly didactic and in which allegory is used to encourage the reader to search for higher spiritual truths.

The framework of the first chapter allows Brown-Grant to set up a discussion of Christine's *Epistre Othéa* as a carefully contrived anti-*Rose* in which allegory is clearly put to work as a means of moral education and reform. Unlike de Meun, Christine is unambiguous in her program of advice, her depiction of worthy and unworthy behaviour in both sexes, her warnings against foolish love and her encouragement of due respect for women's knowledge.

More contentiously, Brown-Grant includes the *Advisio-Christine* among the texts that are relevant to Christine's defence of women. She sees this work as sharing with the *Epistre Othéa* the dual character of a 'mirror for princes' and a defence of women, and argues that it should not be treated merely as an autobiographical defence of Christine's own authority. In Book II of the *Advisio* Christine uses Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to argue that difference in gender is not difference in species, but only an accidental difference within the species. This view will serve as an important premise for Christine's most explicit defence of women, the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Brown-Grant

suggests that it also enables Christine to offer ‘herself as a model for her princely reader’ (p. 121) and that ‘in using a woman as an exemplar for a man, the *Advisio* contributes to Christine’s stand against misogyny’ (p. 122). Here I failed to find the analysis convincing. It assumes that the intended audience for the *Advisio* is male, which is unjustified, since no dedication exists. Secondly, although there clearly is an element of defence of women in this text it relates more obviously to the analogy set up between Christine and Boethius, who both learn that tribulation may offer a surer path to virtue than does success, and whose parallel experience serves to emphasise the moral and spiritual equality of the sexes.

Brown-Grant also discounts the allusion to Boethius (and Dante) in the opening passages of Christine’s *Cité des Dames* which she reads as more strikingly and persistently evocative of the Annunciation (p. 146). This observation could usefully have been extended to a fuller discussion of the role of the Virgin Mary and the mystery of the Trinity in Christine’s work, but this is something we are not offered. Instead Brown-Grant treats this text both through its relationship with Boccaccio and Petrarch’s catalogues of illustrious men and women, and through a discussion of attitude of these authors to the myth of the Golden Age. In her discussion Brown-Grant observes that, although elsewhere (as in her accounts of the parlous state of France) Christine sees France as in decline, she treats women’s achievements as contributing to the progress of humanity (pp. 159–61). She overlooks the passage in Book III, chapter 18 of the *Cité* that ties Christine’s progressive view with Christian revelation. There Justice contrasts the attacks on women in the works of pagan authors with the generally positive account of women provided by the New Testament. Christine thus implies that those who originally fell into the mistake of despising women were bereft of the true doctrine available only after the incarnation, thus alluding to her discussion of Christian revelation in the *Advisio*.

Brown-Grant turns last to the *Livre des Trois Vertus* which she argues is not a betrayal of the *Cité* but a continuation of its project that aims to promote women’s participation in the virtues in order that they may become worthy inhabitants of the city. This chapter returns us to the discussion of the first, pointing out the extent to which the letter of Sebille de Mont Hault, Dame de la Tour, responds to the *Vieille* of the *Rose*, thus bringing to the surface the extent to which this text like the *Epistre Othéa* is an anti-*Rose* (p. 211).

Brown-Grant shows a masterful grasp of the literature on Christine. Her footnotes provide a wealth of material for further research. One of the few discussions that she fails to cite is my *Woman of Reason* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) in which I similarly argued that one should read Christine as providing a defence

of women's moral and spiritual equality with men. This overview will provide an excellent introduction to Christine's defence of women for students in women's studies and history in general, but is likely to be frustrating for some because, while Brown-Grant translates the passages of Latin that she quotes, she fails to translate quotations in French. This seems to me to have been an editorial mistake, for rather than pushing Christine scholarship into new regions, Brown-Grant provides a thorough survey of existing scholarship that is likely to be of as much use to those outside French studies as to those working within it.

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Caviness, Madeline H., *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (The Middle Ages Series), Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 2001; cloth; pp. ix, 231; 80 b/w illustrations; RRP US\$55.00; ISBN 0812235991.

While post-structuralist theory has found a place in the study of medieval literature, it has not featured to any real extent in the study of art. There have been a few interesting and important explorations, such as the work of Michael Camille or Suzanne Lewis, but these examples are rare. Madeline Caviness, a well-respected scholar noted for her work on stained-glass, has in this book set out to apply contemporary theories of the gaze, based on Laura Mulvey's important essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), to medieval art. Mulvey's essay opened up a new avenue of critique for feminist, queer and post-colonial scholars, as well as artists, in art theory and practice. Although challenged and modified, Mulvey's analysis of classic *film noir* cinema highlighted the implicit gendering of coded looking acted out in this genre which presumed an active male gaze and a passive female object of that gaze. Caviness argues that this idea of the 'male gaze' is useful for deconstructing the patriarchal cultural codings of the high Middle Ages. Like most critics who have used Mulvey's theory, she does so only with significant caveats, reminding us that an awareness of historical context (like identity politics) impacts on contemporary theories, thus changing them.

Reflecting her interest in thinking around the issues raised by both the application of modern feminist theory and the challenges found in that imposition on the exposition of medieval art, Caviness has organized her book

in an unconventional manner. In her note to the reader she suggests that the work need not be read sequentially, and that the introduction might be more usefully read last by some readers. Opening with a prelude discussing the problem of Mary, Caviness then goes on to discuss the theoretical framing of the work in her introduction 'The "Male Gaze" and Scopie Economies', which is followed by three case studies: Lot's Wife and Daughters; 'Sado-Erotic Spectacles, Breast Envy, and the Bodies of Martyrs'; and Relics and Body-parts. Accompanying each section is a breathtakingly extensive bibliography broken down into subsections generally dealing separately with relevant contemporary theory and pre-modern scholarship.

Each chapter is also densely documented with ongoing and important discussions continuing into the notes. Occasionally clarification for the commentary in the main text, where the language is sometimes unnecessarily obfuscatory, is found in the footnotes. In her chapter on representations of female martyrs, for example, is found the following sentence: 'Mutilated women did not take charge of their own bodies (St Peter healed Agatha), and only one became cephalophore; most submitted to the phallus' (p. 90). It is only in the notes that we find mention of St Valeria represented holding her decapitated head on a series of late twelfth-century reliquaries, thus explaining the 'cephalophore' reference. I can't help thinking that this type of information might be incorporated back into the main text without danger of losing the theoretical thread; indeed it may act to make more coherent the thought behind the statement. Caviness's text is rich in references to a range of critics such as Kristeva, Bataille and Lacan, and she has also drawn on more subtle readings of Freud, qualifying some criticisms by feminist theorists. She tends to quote pivotal statements from such authors, with less pulling apart of these texts than might have been useful to demonstrate their immediate relevance and application. However, her examples are generally pertinent, as are the images that she discusses.

Much of the material that is examined here has been of great interest in recent years, familiar to us through the works of such writers as Caroline Walker Bynum and Jeffrey Hamburger. Caviness's choices are intriguing. The analysis of the story and representation of Lot's wife and daughters is a particularly fruitful one for explorations of the gaze, for here is a case of transgressive looking and its immediate punishment, as opposed to the apparent acceptance of incestuous behaviour. Caviness also discusses the complexity of the visual, noting how the text sometimes struggles to overwrite the image, as at Canterbury where the representation of Lot's wife as a beautiful statue of salt to a certain degree

contradicts the narrative's message. The need to control the desiring (pagan) gaze is an issue in these 12th century images where a juxtaposed image of a man gazing at a nude male sculpture resonates with Christian presentations of pagan cults as homoerotic. Although she makes reference to homoeroticism in these discussions, there is very little reference to the lesbian gaze, nor to readings that counter the overt masculine viewpoint (such as Patricia Simons' and Erica Rand's essays in Whitney Davis' *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* (New York, 1994). Caviness does track the changes in the imagery of Lot's wife in the 13th century, which reinforced the danger of such looks by disembodiment of the wife's image. Throughout the book she reiterates the changing emphases in the iconography and the internal (and external) pressures on the image.

While a challenging read, the ideas located in this text are provocative and Caviness's juxtaposition of 20th century art works with medieval ones reinforces and complicates further the points she makes. Her drawing on recent discussions on the 'abject', for example, in her discussion of relics and body parts as a strategy to de-eroticise the female body certainly pushed me to reconsider my own readings of these works.

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De Hamel, Christopher, *The Book: a History of the Bible*, London, Phaidon, 2001; cloth; pp. xi, 352; 237 colour illus.; RRP AUS\$69.95; ISBN 0714837741.

The Bible is undoubtedly the single most important book produced in Europe and in the countries colonized by Europeans. Countless different versions and innumerable copies of it have been written or printed over the course of the last two millennia. As a result, the study of the history of the Bible is central to any history of manuscripts and printed books. Christopher De Hamel even goes so far as to suggest that his title could well have been 'The Bible: a History of the Book' – though this seems to ignore the significance of book production outside the European orbit, and especially of the Quran in Islamic countries.

In tackling such a vast subject – 'perhaps the biggest subject in the world' (p. vi) – De Hamel is careful to define and specify his focus. He is interested exclusively in the Bible as a book, in its changing manifestations as a physical object. He points to the essentially unchanging nature of the basic Biblical text,

despite its different versions and languages, as a reason for leaving textual issues alone. He emphasizes that he is not interested in theology or in the meaning of the Bible, and he carefully sidesteps the question of divine inspiration.

In chronological terms, he concentrates quite heavily on the Bible in the Middle Ages. In fact, his treatment of the medieval Bible occupies almost half of the length of the book, covering along the way such topics as Bible commentaries, picture books and portable Bibles. For the Early Modern period, there is an entire chapter on the Gutenberg Bible and a lengthy discussion of the Bibles of the Protestant Reformation. In contrast, the period from the 18th century onwards is covered in only about 50 pages, including a chapter on missionary Bibles. There is very little on the Bible in the 20th century. Although he observes at one point (p. xi) that the story of the Bible ‘ends with information technology’, there is no treatment of electronic Bibles or of the various manifestations of the Bible on the Web. The final chapter, in fact, is devoted to the ‘search for origins’ in the form of the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Christian papyri.

In keeping with his interest in the Bible as a physical object, the focus throughout is on ‘new manifestations of the Bible text’ (p. xi). As a result, it is mainly Protestant Bibles – rather than Catholic Bibles – which feature in the later sections, especially in the period from the 18th century onwards. The geographical and linguistic emphasis is on Western Europe, and particularly on Bibles in Latin or English. Nevertheless, early Hebrew and Greek Bibles form the subject of one chapter.

De Hamel’s text is, for the most part, clearly written and reliable. It is accompanied by – and almost overwhelmed by – an extensive range of beautifully reproduced colour illustrations. Most of these are of medieval manuscripts – some familiar and others less well-known, but all well-chosen. The book as a whole reflects its author’s background and expertise, based on 25 years at Sotheby’s specializing in medieval and illuminated manuscripts, and as the author of several definitive guides to illuminated manuscripts. While it is clearly intended to be an introductory survey rather than an academic study, it is soundly based on the best modern scholarship and closely related to the manuscripts themselves. As well as being an excellent introduction to the medieval and Early Modern Bible for students and the general reader, it will be of considerable value to teachers and researchers as a summary of the current state of knowledge in this enormous field.

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De Vega, Lope, *Three Major Plays* [*Fuente Ovejuna; The Knight from Olmedo; Punishment Without Revenge*], trans., intro. and notes by Gwynne Edwards (World's Classics), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999; paper; pp. xli, 300; RRP £7.99; ISBN 0-19-283337-5.

Renown for his prolific output as a professional writer, Lope de Vega (1562-1635) was largely responsible for the creation of a new style of drama for the public theatres of Golden Age Spain, a drama characterized by its fidelity to the imperatives of plot, its freedom from a classicism which would have stifled it, its sheer inventiveness, and its awareness of the audience and the immediacy and power of the theatrical medium.

In this Oxford World's Classics paperback, Gwynne Edwards provides the reader with a fresh, first-rate translation of three of Lope de Vega's most famous plays and a more than satisfactory introduction to the stage practices and major dramatic conventions of the period. The critical overview of the plays is necessarily brief, but offers general readers and new students alike valuable guidance and insight into major cultural issues and critical responses to the plays. Edwards furnishes the reader with a vivid picture of the age of Lope de Vega and the social position he occupied, and includes consideration of the author's literary theory, his prolific output and his use of a wide range of sources and ideas.

The three plays gathered in the volume are also discussed separately, providing a good overview of historical background, and social and political implications of the plays for contemporary audiences. Edwards points to some major themes addressed by scholars, such as the ideals of honour, justice, and the ruler's proper exercise of power; he also notes Lope's complex treatment of traditional topoi, like the 'menosprecio de corte, alabanza de aldea' (the contrasted praise of the countryside and dispraise of court life).

Not to detract from Edwards' capacity to refer to an enormous range of scholarly material on what are some of the most widely discussed examples of Spanish literature, his introduction to the plays is particularly impressive from the point of view of a structuralist criticism. It includes ample discussion of their richness of imagery and symbolism, and their interaction of allegorical structures and sometimes finely developed characterization; he discusses the prevalence of conventional dramatic figures and plot-motifs, while stressing Lope's capacity to add an extra layer of depth or complexity.

I have one minor qualm about Edwards' critical apparatus. Though his bibliography is necessarily concise, and does, moreover, provide reference both

to major editions of the plays and to the work of other scholar-translators, as well as to a range of critical practices, it could have included some reference to recent examples of feminist criticism which is reshaping contemporary understanding of these plays.

Edwards notes that Lope alternated between a range of verse forms and rhyme patterns, while primarily using an octosyllabic verse, which offered more fluidity and speed than did blank verse. In translating these plays, he comments that one of his priorities was to preserve the ‘sense of flow and rhythm’ of the original (p. xxxv). Indeed, having examined Edwards’ translation of *The Knight of Olmedo* in this volume, alongside Willard F. King’s version of 30 years ago, I have no hesitation in recommending Edwards’ as more faithful to the style, and, ultimately, the sense, of Lope’s work. While King turned the text into prose, Edwards translates the play into an elegant, octosyllabic metre which gives way to occasional lines of 9-10 syllables where required. True enough, King can, in places, come closer to a literal sense of the words, but the grace of the original form, which ultimately contributes to its tone and hence some of its meaning or significance, is lost. This is, of course, particularly evident in the play’s soliloquies and other key speeches.

In similar terms, Edwards does not refrain from creating a sense of the estrangement of a foreign and historically distant text, by reproducing the archaic, sometimes metaphorical, idiom in which it was written—in such instances, the endnotes provide clarification. King, by contrast, modernized the form, making the direct meaning clear, but also quashing some of the poetic beauty of the original in the process. In an instance of this, Fabia, a bawd, is welcomed with exultant praise by Alonso, the protagonist, and Fabia refers to his compliments as ‘caricias’. King translates the term as ‘flattery’, while Edwards allows the reader to savour the metaphorical character of the language by making a literal translation: ‘caresses’. The reader is therefore placed in a similar position to a contemporary Spanish speaker.

This edition is of interest to a general readership and is also of great value as an initial introduction to the drama of Golden Age Spain, for both undergraduate and postgraduate students of Spanish, comparative literature or theatre studies. It continues an important tradition of the Oxford World’s Classics series of making a wide range of literary works and quality scholarship available for a popular, modern readership.

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Dockray-Miller, Mary, *Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon England* (The New Middle Ages), Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000; cloth; pp. xiv, 161; RRP £30.00; ISBN 0333913787.

In *Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon England*, Mary Dockray-Miller professes to locate the account of motherhood which may be found in a selection of Anglo-Saxon texts. In Anglo-Saxon culture, property was transmitted through patriarchal mechanisms and, likewise, textual narratives derived from patriarchal interests. While emphasising the elision of female roles in works such as Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Dockray-Miller claims that power and property might pass from mother to daughter and sister to sister, as in the case of the abbacy of Æthelthryth's house at Ely. She also maintains that this demonstrates matrilineal practice which undermined patriarchal dominance.

In Chapter One, Dockray-Miller argues that the problem with studying mother-daughter relations in any period stems from the cultural understanding of the role of the 'son's mother' which reinforces patriarchal dominance and intrinsically undermines a relationship between mother and daughter. Locating her study in feminist understandings of the nurturing and teaching roles of mothering, she seeks to reclaim the 'female genealogy' inherent in various mother-child relationships embedded in such texts as Bede's *History*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and *Beowulf*.

According to Chapter Two, the roles of royal women in the conversion and subsequent establishment of a network of monastic houses in Kent, East Anglia and Northumbria suggest 'a system of religious matrilineage that depended on biological as well as spiritual maternity.' In these areas the great double houses were founded by royal women, who usually held foundation abbeys and then passed them on to daughters, sisters, nieces. Dockray-Miller musters no new evidence for female control of double houses or abbatial participation in political relations (both these issues have been well examined in a large corpus of historical and textual studies). But she does draw together a wide variety of supporting texts such as charters, hagiographical materials, and the Penitential of Theodore, to support her emphasis on the mutual support, nurturing and teaching which mothers and aunts provided for sisters and daughters. It is in her arguments that the relationships and power structures of the nunneries did not reproduce dynastic patriarchal patterns that this chapter becomes unconvincing. Her principal argument for this seems to be based in a manuscript fragment containing parts of *Tha Halgan* and part of a ritual possibly

performed in the nunnery at Thanet. This ritual pertains to the reception of a nun into the community by her mother but it is not clear how this text does not replicate patriarchal power structures or indeed how it demonstrates an undermining of them.

In Chapter Three, Dockray-Miller endeavours to recover from the well-known corpus of Alfredian texts the maternal genealogy of Æthelflæd Lady of the Mercians. While the interactions between Æthelflæd and her paternal grandmother, Osburgh, and aunt, Æthelswyth, and her mother, Eanswith, are (possibly) present in contemporary sources, these do not point irrevocably to a maternal genealogy of nurturing and teaching, let alone to non-patriarchal patterns of public power. Æthelflæd's collaboration with her male relatives, her use of standard methods of conducting internal politics such as charters and religious foundations, and her command of the Mercian army, all seem to reflect traditional patriarchal methods of rule. It is undeniable that Æthelflæd was neglected by the male historians of her reign (with the exception of the *Mercian Register*) but wherever one uncovers her history there seems little in it to suggest that her actions were intended to further a matrilineal subversion of patriarchal practices. Ælfwynn's attempted succession to her mother's role as *myrcna hlæfdige* is a clear case of matrilineal inheritance, but then Æthelflæd was clearly wanting to exclude her brother, Edward, and had no other child to leave in control of Mercia. In the second last paragraph of this chapter, Dockray-Miller explains, perhaps somewhat belatedly, that she has endeavoured to reconstruct Æthelflæd's maternal genealogy in order to show her as part of a 'vibrant female community' while still accepting that her relations with male political actors were in patriarchal mode.

Chapter Four moves from historical to literary maternal roles, focussing on the mothers of sons in *Beowulf*. The first example is Modthrytho who masculinises herself by performing violent male actions. But the theme of this book is the purported maternal undermining of patriarchal performance and Modthrytho does not seem easily to fit this pattern. Grendel's mother is interpreted psychoanalytically as a warrior-avenger who grieves at her failure to nurture her son. Hildeburh, Hygd and Wealhtheow all endeavour to fulfil nurturing maternal roles, though only the last of these succeeds in disrupting patriarchal expectations. This chapter takes a very different approach from that of Chapters Two and Three. It focuses on literary constructions of mother-son relations and the endeavours of those mothers to protect and teach their offspring. This chapter is more successful than the previous two, perhaps because conjecture can be more appropriate in the deconstruction of literary texts.

The problem with this book is not the interpretation of the texts and their contexts and purposes. As Dockray-Miller emphasises, it is clearly possible to recover the relationships and actions of mothers in Anglo-Saxon texts. But she draws some very tenuous connections to try to establish her thesis, particularly in Chapters Two and Three. There is no doubt that the authors of the texts she examines in these chapters did elide the contribution of women to the events they describe. But the relationships she sets out to demonstrate as being determined from these texts have not been convincingly established. It is conceivable that such relationships did exist; there can be no doubt that some royal women exerted personal influence, and perhaps did foster such matrilineal inheritances. But the evidence provided in this book does not confirm such optimism.

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Early English Books Online, Ann Arbor, ProQuest, 2001; Web service; RRP US\$14,212 p.a.

Just under 50 years ago, Allardyce Nicoll reported on what he called a revolution in the world of scholarship, created by the issue of the microfilm series *Early English Books* (EEB). One result of that revolution was the foundation of the Shakespeare Institute at Stratford-upon-Avon, with Nicoll himself as the first director: ‘a fundamental element in its planning was precisely this basic use of microfilm. . . . it was decided that its own library should in the main be of microfilm reels’ (‘The “Basic” Use of Microfilm’, *PMLA* 68.4(ii) [1953], p. 62). That famous microfilm series now exists in an online version, EEBO. Many of the benefits Nicoll enumerated cross over into EEBO; some of them are enhanced by the crossover, or will be; there are at this stage also a few limitations and glitches.

The central benefit of EEB, and the source of Nicoll’s revolution, was its ‘important service for scholars, by enabling them to have virtually all the books within their period of study gathered together in a single centre’ (p. 65). James Binns put this point more graphically in a later overview of EEB: ‘no library has a complete run of *STC* books – not the Folger, nor the Huntington, not Bodley, nor yet the British Library. These libraries may each have somewhere between about 65% to 80% or even a little more of *STC* items, but even so they still cannot claim to have between them every *STC* book’ (*Intellectual*

Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England [Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1990], p. xix). When complete, EEBO will contain every book listed in the Pollard and Redgrave and the Wing *Short Title Catalogues*, as well as the complete collection of Thomason Tracts. It has not yet reached this level of comprehensiveness. Though it includes 95% or more of the books for which I have searched, it still has a long way to go in its coverage of the Thomason broadsides or pamphlets, which appears at the time of writing to be about 30% to 35%.

Not only were Nicoll's microfilms available in one centre, but 'a reader never has to wait an hour and a half while a particular volume is fetched from the vaults; he can be at work on the text he wants within a few minutes after putting in his call' (p. 66). EEBO vastly enhances this convenience, and not only for the 'she's apparently excluded from Nicoll's libraries, like Virginia Woolf at Trinity College, Cambridge. Texts no longer subsist anywhere so nhip as a physical 'centre'; their virtual reality can now manifest on any networked computer terminal – in institutions able and willing to pay the astronomical price, it must be added. The speed at which EEBO searches its catalogue, and, even more, the speed at which it delivers its page images, are ways in which it performs better than might have been expected.

EEBO overcomes other rigidities, not only of the traditional rare book library but also of the microfilm library, such as their limited opening hours and stringent working conditions. Networked scholars can examine an unlimited number of books in their work study or their home study, while drinking coffee or listening to Bach. I have just been consulting Simon Sturtevant's *Treatise of Metallica* (1612) and Sir John Pettus's *Fodinae regales* (1670) while observing an Australian King-Parrot (*Alisterus scapularis*) perched in a Sydney blue gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*). Undoubtedly this conjunction has never occurred before. Probably, such flexibilities and serendipities will make for more productive research. They are related to a general redefinition of the categories of textuality, arising from interrelated 'changes in the techniques of reproduction of text, in the form or vehicle of text, and also in the practice of reading' ('Before and After Gutenberg: A Conversation with Roger Chartier', <http://www.honco.net>). Having said this, it is also true that the conditions of the rare book library sharpen one's concentration through their sense of precious opportunity and through their enabling of unexpected meetings with fellow scholars, a corporeal serendipity no less exquisite than the serendipities of cyberspace.

EEBO's searchable catalogue enables one not only to read the books one is looking for but to trawl for books previously unknown. Items can be searched

for by any or all components of their STC entry, as augmented by the EEB catalogue (author, long title, subject, printer, keywords, date). The subject search capability is especially well designed and comprehensive.

The contents of the books have not yet been converted to digitised text, as in the well established Chadwyck-Healey series such as *English Poetry* and *English Drama*. Instead, EEBO gives the user an image of every page or opening. Page images reveal things that are concealed by digitised texts, and even by the best modern editions. I had never realized, for example, the difference between reading Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in the spacious quartos of 1590 or 1596 and in the busy folio of 1609, with its double columns, numbered stanzas, and heraldic ornaments.

When it first appears, the image is usually formatted to fit the dimensions of the computer screen (though sometimes images are smaller than they need to be). The image can be magnified or reduced over a wide range. Continuous browsing through the text, using the 'Next' button, maintains the chosen size, but a jump to a different part of the book often causes it to revert irritatingly to the default size. (This does not always happen, though I have not discerned a pattern to the different occurrences.) Nicoll pointed out that photographic contrasts could make books in microfilm more legible than the originals. My sampling suggests that EEBO in turn improves on the microfilm version. The EEB versions of three books, Nicholas Carr's *De scriptorum britannicorum paucitate* (1576; STC2 10674), Jakob Falckenburg's *Britannia* (1578; STC2 10674), and Ogerius Bellehachius' *Sacrosancta bucolica* (1583; STC2 1846), contain sections that are smudged or in which print shows through pages, taking the text close to illegibility in some passages. These passages have been impressively cleaned up in the EEBO version. On the other hand, areas of white blank out the text on pages of *The seuerall engines that Nicholas Bloy, enginer, professeth* (1620; STC2 3138.5) and of *Biblos tes demosias euches* (Cambridge, 1665; Wing B3632). I cannot say whether or not these defects occur in the original text and are therefore inexpugnable.

The convenience with which books can be accessed is not yet matched by the convenience with which they can be read. It is (or should one now say 'was'?) quicker and easier to scroll through the microfilms of EEB than through EEBO. Moving around within a book is cumbersome, requiring one to select an image number, which has only a rough relation to page numbers. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* of 1590 consists of 316 images. The third of its three books might be expected to begin at the two-thirds mark, but image 211 takes one well into that

book. One's estimates do become shrewder: looking for the House of Mammon canto in the *Faerie Queene* of 1609, I calculated or guessed correctly on the first try. Nevertheless, it is essential to keep a record of image number if one intends to go back to a particular page or passage. This is easy to forget, especially because the image number is not usually visible when the page image is fully displayed.

The experience of entering a book by typing in an image number is of course quite unlike the experience of leafing through a printed volume. The price one pays for the marvellous convenience and the new possibilities of EEBO, as for EEB, is the loss of the book as a physical object. To quote Binns again: 'it does matter [– at least, it can matter –] whether a volume is a tall and stately folio, which would have sold at great cost, or a cheap duodecimo edition for the pocket of a student' (p. xxi). Not only that, but EEBO does not enable one to compare the contents of different books, or of different copies of the same book, except by printing out the page images. For this purpose, an array of paper-and-leather objects on a table remains the most convenient technology.

Because one is dealing with images and not with digitised text, it is not possible to copy and paste text. Transferring text to one's own documents still requires the painstaking transcription familiar from the rare book library. It is possible to print page images, but this is time-consuming. It is usually necessary to convert the images, one by one, to PDF format, which then seems to accommodate itself only to an A4 page in 'portrait' orientation – an unfortunately cramped arrangement when one is dealing with page openings, whose configuration is obviously better suited to a – 'landscape' orientation. Scanning the images thus printed is of course an option for transferring text to one's own documents, though scanning creates its own well-known problems with early modern printing.

EEBO does not yet make it possible to search the contents of books, though it does usefully separate out illustrations as a category of images. The search limitation is in the course of being redressed, with the text of 25,000 works scheduled to become searchable by 2004, and the rest to follow. This will be achieved by keyboarding the entire text of each book, to create text files, which will have embedded links to corresponding page images. This searching capability will overcome the present clumsiness in navigating books, since one will be able to search for a known passage (or even a page number?) within a given book. It will also presumably make it possible to copy and paste text. If the keyboarding is 99.995% accurate, as promised, this copying will be undertaken with greater confidence than one can have in most such text files, including the Chadwyck-Healey ones; moreover the links to page images will enable one to check for any

improbable instance of the 0.005% of error. When it enables text searches of the entire corpus of printed books in the period, EEBO will become an extremely powerful research tool, separating it decisively from its microfilm predecessor and very likely creating a yet further revolution in Early Modern scholarship.

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Eastmond, Antony, ed., *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium* (Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies Publications 9), Aldershot, Ashgate Variorum, 2001; cloth; pp. xxi, 297; RRP £45.00; ISBN 0754603229.

If the Byzantine Empire is on the fringe of the awareness of most western medievalists, a book of studies on its relations with its eastern neighbours from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries may seem doubly remote. The contributors to this volume, the fruits of a conference held in 1999, make few concessions to the unlearned, employing as they do Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Persian, Syriac and Turkish 'in addition to the normal Greek and other western and Slavonic languages.' They discuss such exotic people as the *katepan* Bagrat Vxkac'i, the *catholicos* Yovhannes V Drasxanakerte'i, the historical corpus known as *K'art'lis c'xovreba* and the kingdom of Ap'xazet'i. And yet this collection of studies has an interest which far transcends the antiquarian, for there are very important things to take away from it.

Western scholars, doubtless unconsciously thinking back to the Roman Empire, have tended to think of Byzantium as part of a Mediterranean world, for which relations with western Christian powers were of great importance. But the Byzantines did not think of themselves as part of a world stretching away to the west; for them, the caliph tended to bulk larger than any figure in Christendom. For their part, the eastern neighbours of the Empire did not always treat it with the deference demanded by its own ideology. Georgian perceptions of Byzantium show nothing of the resentment of a marginal people. Astonishingly, the Georgians felt able to term the Byzantines barbarians, and, in a move paralleled elsewhere by the ideology of the Serbs, they came to see themselves as rivals and heirs of the Empire. The neighbours of the Empire lived in a spacious world. A detailed study of the decorative program in the Armenian palace and palace church built at Aghamar, an island in Lake Van, early in the tenth century

shows an iconography appropriated from the world of Islam being used to express themes of power; a roughly contemporary example of one aspect occurs as far away as Umayyad Spain. The book is an important reminder of the need to reconfigure our understanding of how the parts of the medieval world fit together.

The volume also deconstructs the notion of frontier. One intriguing paper considers the kind of control the Byzantines held over territories conquered from the Muslims in the tenth century. They were wealthy and heterodox; the imperial authorities were content to leave pre-existing administrative structures intact, and at least initially indigenous local personnel were given considerable authority on the ground. Another contribution considers the fluidity of self-identity along the Perso-Byzantine frontier, and the finely calibrated balancing acts performed by a number of peoples are evaluated. What are we to make of the Turkomans from outside the Empire who spent the winters in imperial territory? Or what was the precise situation of Cilicia, an Armenian kingdom which was a vassal of Byzantium on the border of the crusader world? The lines modern scholars draw across maps to mark different states, even when they accurately reflect political realities, suggest a firmness of division that the realities almost always belied.

One's final reaction to such a learned and thought provoking volume is to wonder about the possibility of synthesis. To what extent would it be possible to take the histories of such disparate peoples together? Answering this question would involve considering the common situations they shared, the complexity of which is suggested by the practice of the rulers among the Turkomans to use the Greek, Arabic and Persian languages to express their identity, so performing an exercise in 'cultural polyglossia' in which various models of self-identification co-existed. But beyond this, it would be necessary to master their interactions. References in this volume to Armenian texts translated into Greek and Arabic, manuscripts in Georgian, Armenian and Albanian held on Mt Sinai, and even a translation of the Rule of St Benedict into Armenian, suggest links it would be good to know more about. Perhaps an Obolensky of the East will arise, capable of binding the disparate parts of this Byzantine commonwealth together.

In the meantime, this is a fascinating work which deserves the attention of readers who would not normally pick up a book dealing with such matters.

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Ellis, Steve, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Medieval Cultures 24), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000; cloth; pp. xiv, 204; RRP US\$29.95; ISBN 0816633762.

In this engaging and informative study, Ellis offers a survey of the modern reception of Chaucer organised into thematic areas, ranging from the nineteenth-century Pre-Raphaelite interest to modern cartoons and Gothic novels using ideas from the *Canterbury Tales*, with due attention given to the debated issue of translation. Ellis carefully deals with the implications of the links between academic and non-academic interest in the work of the ‘father of English literature’, while guiding the reader’s perception of the phenomenon in an intelligent and comprehensive manner.

In the first ‘taster’ chapter, Ellis analyses the Kelmscott edition of Chaucer’s work, a defining point in the modern use of his work. This edition and its use display the Pre-Raphaelite preference for Chaucer as a poet of nature, his work being regarded as a medium of access to the classical world, from a positive yet selective point of view (p. 9). Ellis cogently traces the discrepancy between Morris’s socialism and his sympathy for Chaucer’s portrayals of nobility: for Morris Chaucer became a ‘gentleman-aesthete, sunning himself on the social sidelines’ (p. 14). Informative, yet concise, the chapter provides a basis for discussion and reference for what follows, albeit at times frustrating for the non-specialist reader, as there are no illustrations of the Kelmscott edition.

Popular Chaucer is the theme of the following section, in which Ellis brings to light the process through which Chaucer’s work became a domain of academic research rather than of general interest. Much of the chapter is concerned with the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century preference for what was called Chaucer’s ‘normality’, seen as a sign of his ‘manliness’, his freshness and a healthy sense of life even in the bawdy content of his *Canterbury Tales*; in other words a Chaucer of ‘merrie England’ (p. 21), to the extent that this cheerful mode was seen even in works like *Troilus and Criseyde*. However a positive aspect of the academic investigation at the beginning of the twentieth century was, according to Ellis, Kittredge’s interest in human nature as depicted by Chaucer, and Chesterton’s interest in Chaucerian depiction of medieval guild identity. Both critics thus brought Chaucer reception into the area of close literary and contextual analysis – taking it away from the Pre-Raphaelite exclusive view of nature in his work.

Chaucer’s ‘childlike manfullness’ is furthermore uncovered by Ellis

through an analysis of children's literature based on retellings of the *Canterbury Tales*. From Victorian moralizing, dismissive of the 'low' tone – and distorting Chaucer's work to the point of making him a precursor of Luther, to the modern versions of his tales (1984), completely devoid of historical contextualisation, Ellis notes the 'usefulness' of the tales in a context that pares away any indication of time and period – forefronting the universality rather than the particular. A common feature of all retellings is the glossing over of the indecent aspect of the fabliaux, with the exception of the last decades of the twentieth century, when the Miller's Tale retains almost all its details, albeit in a jovial tone. The result appears to be, Ellis contends, the 'Chaucer-as-child trope' – perhaps an image used by Chaucer himself 'as a strategy of opposition' (p. 57).

In 'Writers' Chaucer', Ellis tackles the use made by modern writers of the legacy of Chaucer's work. Pound dismissed Chaucer's work for not using more literary techniques (p. 81), while he himself showed only 'sporadic' engagement with Chaucer's work. In an earlier chapter Ellis has already highlighted Chaucer's influence over writers like Yeats, whose 'debt' to the great poet becomes the theme of the section on 'Spoken Chaucer'.

Translations of Chaucer's work become the most contested area of discussion in the book, in which specific examples from the work of Nevill Coghill, Frank Ernest Hill and David Wright are discussed in detail. The effect of the comparisons is illuminating, giving the reader a critical point for judging the merits and faults of translating and adapting Chaucerian verse. For the teacher of Chaucer this is in fact one of the most useful chapters, along with 'English Chaucer', in which Ellis follows the process of the nationalist 'Englishing' of the poet in the nineteenth-century imagination.

In 'Performance Chaucer' Ellis brings into focus the specific modern interest in the bawdiness of the *Canterbury Tales*, much to the loss of any of the other traits of Chaucer's style, while in 'Novel Chaucer' he draws attention to a distorted, albeit interesting, 'dark' Chaucer, seen from a 'Gothic' perspective, to some extent in the same line as the fashion started by Eco's *Name of the Rose*. However innovative these approaches have proved to be, Ellis discovers a 'mania for accessibility' (p. 140) in most of these attempts, much to the loss of the real qualities of Chaucerian verse and fourteenth-century reality and society.

Ellis's style is characterised by his careful linking of essays, which may be read individually yet are constantly reintegrated into the whole, with promises (always kept) of further discussion in the other chapters. The book addresses both the informed reader (like the first chapter, on the Kelmscott edition) and

the less knowledgeable – in sections like ‘Performance Chaucer’. Altogether an entertaining, well-written book, with something for everybody.

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Fish, Stanley, *How Milton Works*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2001; cloth; pp. 616; RRP US\$35.00; ISBN 0674004655.

In this large volume, Stanley Fish explores a single thesis: ‘Milton works from the inside out’ (p. 23). The whole body of Milton’s verse and prose is, according to Fish, characterised by the priority of the internal over the external. Epistemologically, this means that knowledge is not acquired by a movement from empirical data to the mind, but vice versa: the mind uses certain non-verifiable, axiomatic assumptions to interpret the external world. Thus one’s beliefs cannot be proved or disproved by external events or phenomena, but rather the external world serves only to confirm what the mind already knows. Moreover, Fish posits that Milton must also work from the inside out for the reader. Political, theological and philosophical questions should be abstracted from Milton’s language, rather than being brought to the text from without.

This internal-to-external thesis is most convincingly presented in the analyses of the shorter poems, *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* (Chapter 9), *Comus* (Chapters 3 and 4) and *Paradise Regained* (Chapters 10 and 11). The Nativity Ode portrays the ‘dramatically undramatic’ form of Miltonic action, wherein the righteous character simply possesses a certain state of mind, and consistently maintains it in the face of external evil. Similarly, the chastity of the Lady in *Comus* is dramatically static, incapable of being moved by the external influence of Comus. The only real movement is in the reader’s or spectator’s developing understanding of good and evil. Thus the same lack of action which some have criticised in the masque is for Fish its fundamental dramatic merit. *Paradise Regained* likewise portrays the internal, entirely stable (and therefore passive) goodness of Christ against Satan’s temptations of action and movement. Fish compares the verse’s style to this theme of interior stasis: Christ’s rather colourless language, as opposed to Satan’s luxuriant rhetoric, is ‘the verbal equivalent of standing and waiting, of doing nothing’ (p. 339). Moreover, the reader’s response of increasing approval of passivity and

disapproval of assertive action is itself 'a subplot in the poem's action' (p. 337). Thus in the three poems the reader is moved towards virtue by the interior stasis of Milton's heroic characters.

The simple idea that virtue is equated in these works with a static condition of mind, rather than any external action, has much to commend it. Indeed, it seems that the whole argument of *How Milton Works* is essentially a development of Fish's perceptive reading of *Comus* and *Paradise Regained*. It is unfortunate then that the same interpretative thesis yields considerable distortion when applied to other works and to Milton's oeuvre as a whole. The analysis of *Samson Agonistes* (Chapters 12 and 13), for example, is both eccentric and strained. The argument in Chapter 7 that *Lycidas* is concerned with the immolation of the individual will is unconvincing, although Fish is surely right when he observes that Milton's 'fierce egoism is but one-half of his story' (p. 280).

Fish's argument is weakest when the discussion turns to Milton's prose. Chapter 5, on the *Areopagitica*, and Chapter 6, on the early prose, are characterised by both convoluted and reductive interpretative strategies, and the strange admixture of post-structuralist approaches prevents these chapters from achieving any real coherence of argument. Nevertheless, even in the discussion of Milton's prose there are moments of brilliance, as is the case in Fish's acute analysis of the sentence on true and false eloquence in Milton's *Apology against a Pamphlet* (pp. 115-20).

The book's most serious flaw, as also its greatest merit, arises from the nature of the thesis itself. To identify any single interpretative key to the entire Milton oeuvre is, even if not wholly convincing, a formidable achievement. Yet the simplicity of Fish's interpretative key invests the entire book with a repetitiousness that is hard to excuse in a study of this size. To the degree to which Fish's argument remains focused, it tends quickly to become repetitious. Recognising this, Fish offers an evasive apology at the start: 'since one of my theses is that Milton himself changed very little ... I am comfortable with the notion that I keep discovering the same patterns and meanings over and over again' (p. vii). On the other hand, when Fish strays even slightly from his central thesis, the discussion can too quickly appear merely digressive. Thus the illuminating reading of the separation scene in *Paradise Lost* (Chapter 15), for example, is one of the book's better pieces of literary criticism, but is not closely enough tied to the main argument.

In spite of its several shortcomings, *How Milton Works* is a fascinating and ambitious contribution to Milton scholarship. If the book fails to achieve

any of the decisive greatness of *Surprised by Sin* (1967), Fish nevertheless demonstrates that he is still one of Milton's most spirited and original readers.

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Franklin, James, *The Science of Conjecture: Evidence and Probability before Pascal*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 2001; cloth; pp. xiii, 497; RRP US\$55.00; ISBN 0801865697.

One rarely comes across a book which offers up such delights on every page, which is not only lucidly written but employs a wry sense of humour, which shows a magisterial grasp of a sweep of history and culture from early Egypt to the early modern period and which, as far as this medievalist is concerned, shows the rationality and subtlety of thought current in a period which is still aberrantly referred to as the Dark Ages.

James Franklin is a senior lecturer in mathematics at the University of New South Wales, and the rather forbidding title of the book indicates a subject area which should be of interest to only a few. Do not be put off: this is a book which belongs in every library, and should be read by any one with any interest in the very many periods discussed.

Franklin deals not only with the mathematical and scientific use of probability, but with the important discussions about doubt, scepticism, rationality, and probable reasons in ancient and medieval societies. His vast breadth of learning encompasses mathematics and law and the development of ideas. Thus, the book is invaluable to historians of philosophy as well as law, and to literary scholars and historians generally. This volume will stand as a necessary corrective to simplistic attributions of the Middle Ages, for instance, as a period of epistemological fracture or irrationality. Actually, most people manage to come to terms with what is reasonable, probable and more probable. As Franklin ably shows, there is a broad range of choice between absolute knowledge and complete scepticism. Primary sources are quoted extensively, and the comprehensive bibliography and notes will be trawled by many to further their research. While never losing control of the vast array of material assembled, Franklin gives sufficient space to the voices of older writers, many famous, but many known only to specialists in various fields. Consequently, the reader has

the excitement of finding new perspectives and new voices over the centuries.

A summary of the contents reveals the depth of material covered. Franklin opens with a review of what was considered proof by the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the Jews, the Romans and, an indication of the incredible breadth of perspective, the Indians. The exposition moves on to the early European law courts and up to the Inquisition. Another brief discussion of law in the east provides further context.

Renaissance Law, the witch trials and concepts of the reasonable man are dealt with in Chapter Three. Chapter Four explores the doubting conscience and moral certainty, including discussions of Grotius, Hobbes, English casuistry, Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz and Pascal. Chapter Five, on 'Rhetoric, Logic and Theory', deals with probability, persuasion and rationality from the Greeks to late Scholastic logic. Chapter Six is concerned with hard science from Aristotle to Galileo; Chapter Seven then turns to soft science and history, and a diverting discussion of divination, astrology, experimentation and the authenticity of documents and histories. Chapter Eight, 'Philosophy, Action and Induction', covers Carneade's mitigated scepticism, Epicureans and such stalwarts as Scotus, Ockham and Nicholas of Autrecourt, through to Bacon, Descartes, the Jesuits and Pascal. Chapter Nine, 'Religion: Laws of God, Laws of Nature', explores the arguments from design, revelation and the reasonableness of Christianity and, of course, Pascal's wager.

Chapter Ten, 'Aleatory Contracts: Insurance, Annuities and Bets', provides a striking example of the imaginative range of this book, and brings unexpected rewards to the student of scepticism by showing how people dealt with uncertainty in the real-life conditions of business and law. Chapter Eleven moves to what one would expect from the book's title: a discussion of dice. Yet, here again, the chapter exceeds expectations by its fascinating sweep from games of chance in antiquity to ideas of probability in Pascal.

In any work which covers such a massive range and period of materials, specialists could possibly find one or two things to quibble with in their distinctive areas. Yet Franklin's judicious and careful approach to the extensive primary materials inclines me to think these would be quibbles only.

The book has a valuable index, extensive notes and, in accordance with the generosity of the rest of the book, both an epilogue (on 'The Survival of Unquantified Probability'); again, do not be put off by the title, for there are intriguing nuggets here about, for instance, Austen's use of probability in the evaluation of evidence in *Pride and Prejudice*, and an appendix which reviews the secondary works on probability before 1660.

It is difficult to overestimate the richness of this book; it will be plumbed for years to educate and to provoke scholars into new areas of research. Buy this book for your shelves: you may need it for your own research but, more importantly, this is a book to read for sheer pleasure. The author's respect for other ways of thinking, his clear-sighted appraisal which eschews dogmatism, but always offers fresh perceptions, makes this a learned, scholarly, and always fascinating book of delights.

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Garay, Kathleen and Madeleine Jeay, ed. and trans., *The Life of Saint Douceline, a Beguine of Provence* (Library of Medieval Women), Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2001; cloth; pp. viii, 180; RRP US\$75.00; ISBN 0859916294.

With the translation of this Provençal *vita*, English-language scholars and teachers now have access to a life story which rivals that of Christina the Astonishing in its seemingly extra-human characteristics. While the Beguine Christina is famous today for such bodily wonders as emerging unscathed from bread ovens (and, indeed, for throwing herself voluntarily into the ovens in the first place), the southern French Douceline de Digne will undoubtedly now gain similar fame as the Beguine who would spend entire days levitating in church, not touching the ground except with her two big toes. Sometimes she was suspended even higher in the air, with enough space below her that the crowds of people she attracted were able to kiss the soles of her feet. At other times she would cry aloud in a state of ecstasy, floating above the ground with her arms outstretched in a cross. On these occasions she would see the sovereign power of God and, through some kind of unspecified gestures of her arms, she would pass this knowledge on to her female community.

This unique woman lived from approximately 1215 to 1274. She founded three communities of Beguines, at Roubaud, Hyères, and Marseilles, and presided over all three as leader. Her *vita* (*Li vida de la benaurada sancta Doucelina*) survives in a single manuscript and was composed by Douceline's successor as prioress, Philippine Porcellet. The *Life* shows the very strong connections between the southern French Beguines and the Franciscans, with Douceline's

communities attending the local Franciscan church and with Douceline frequently stressing the absolute priority of poverty in the Beguine way of life.

But although Douceline preferred to concentrate on poverty, charity and service, she became known in the wider community for her raptures. Whenever she heard God spoken of, or indeed whenever she experienced any kind of pleasure at all, then this would trigger her extraordinary ecstasies. The raptures were so strong, and their effects on Douceline's body so obvious to onlookers, that they could not remain secret. Significantly, Douceline did not want to experience these embodied raptures. Even more significantly, the tactics she used to avoid raptures were in themselves tactics focussed on the body. To stop herself hearing any words that might precipitate the raptures, Douceline would prick herself with needles until her hands were torn and blue. Ironically, once these wounds were discovered, Douceline's fame extended even further. The *vita* emphasises all the lay power-brokers who were impressed by Douceline's raptures, particularly stressing Douceline's role in encouraging Charles of Anjou, count of Provence and king of Sicily, to restore the Franciscans to political favour on the strength of her reputation.

On the other hand, not everyone was impressed by Douceline's bodily wonders and we read many instances of social tension, just as we do in the *vita* of Christina the Astonishing. Critics would test Douceline's raptures by poking her with shoemakers' awls and throwing pellets of molten lead at her. Thus we have the important situation where Douceline's raptures were manifested by her bodily actions and, equally, the sceptics' tests were also concentrated on bodily actions. There remains the unavoidable fact that Douceline's spiritual credentials (either positive or negative) were always premised on what Douceline did with her body and, more to the point, what other people were able to detect her doing and experiencing with her body.

Garay and Jeay's book will be popular simply because of the fascinating story it tells. The translation would be excellent for teaching purposes; on the other hand, the lack of critical apparatus means that scholars will need to refer to the earlier French edition for fuller details. There is an Introduction and also an Interpretive Essay which provides a solid starting point for what will surely come next, namely, the task of examining just how Douceline compares with her northern contemporaries such as Marie d'Oignies, Lutgard of Aywières, Yvette of Huy, Margaret of Ypres, and so on.

The *vita* will surely prompt even more scholarship in the area of female religious experience and, especially, the vexed issue of how somatic Beguine

spirituality really was. While Garay and Jeay do not mention the debate, the thesis posed by Amy Hollywood is especially pertinent here. That is, we suspect that male authors such as Thomas of Cantimpré seem to have been able to envisage female religious experience only in terms of bodily activities, while, according to Hollywood, female authors on the contrary had no such preoccupation with the somatic. Douceline's *vita* is important because it is a female-authored hagiography, as opposed to the more frequently studied female-authored autobiography. The fact that a female-authored hagiography shows such concentration on the body, whereas the autobiographies do not, perhaps shows us the overwhelming power of the hagiographical genre and its literary conventions. References in the *vita* indicate that the aims of the text were to justify the existence of Douceline's Beguine communities as houses similar to, but still quite separate from, Franciscan communities and also to assert that Douceline truly was a saint, despite some contemporary assertions to the contrary. With such an agenda, Philippine Porcellet seems to have recognised that discussion of Douceline's bodily piety was both socially acceptable and indeed generically essential. Whether it be instances of a Beguine exhibiting praiseworthy religious practice, or a Beguine trying to stop herself exhibiting such practice, or a doubting lay-person testing a Beguine's spiritual credentials, or, finally, a religious community promoting a Beguine's spiritual credentials, in all these instances the female religious experience is concentrated on the tangible, visible, and audible site of the body.

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Hadley, Dawn M. and Julian D. Richards, eds., *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 2), Turnhout, Belgium, Brepols Publishers, 2000; hardback; pp. viii, 331; 29 illustrations; RRP EUR 50.00; ISBN 2503509789.

This collection of 15 essays aims to re-examine the Scandinavian impact on England in the ninth and tenth centuries. Of especial interest is the interaction between the native Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian populations, and the volume's Introduction lays great stress on how 'new interdisciplinary dialogue' between a range of specialisations, from archaeology to physical anthropology to linguistics,

can further our knowledge of what is at the same time a well-traversed and an obscure field, obscure at least in some kinds of evidentiary data, such as what happened to the Church and its organisation in the Danelaw, a question well surveyed by Lesley Abrams and Julia Barrow. Many of the essays do in fact throw new light on the subject, though in the main they do so from the vantage point of a particular specialisation rather than because of their interdisciplinary approach. In this regard, some of the archeological chapters (by Halsall, Richards and Hall) are extremely valuable, especially to non-archaeologists.

There is a brief Introduction by Hadley and Richards and a rather noisy, posturing piece by Simon Trafford, which takes Viking scholars to task for their outmoded attitudes to questions of ethnicity and population movement, and their insistence on giving primacy to linguistic evidence (which, as Matthew Townend reminds us in an excellent chapter, remains primary, even though it needs to be more adventurously deployed sometimes). The art-historical approach to material culture also comes in for criticism, some of it deserved. After Trafford has vented his spleen, the volume settles down to being a series of largely well-researched and well-presented essays which survey old evidence, often present new material and/or show how old material can be re-interpreted in a new light, with very interesting results (cf. Stocker's chapter on the distribution of stone sculpture in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire and Sidebottom's on stone monuments in Derbyshire).

This is a useful collection for students and scholars aiming to gain an overview of recent research on the important subject of the Scandinavian settlement of England. However, it does have some slightly annoying features, not least the tireless insistence by some of the 'young Turks' in the group on lambasting earlier Viking scholars for their narrowness of vision (justified to some extent), while at the same time pushing their own theories about elite groups and political allegiances a little too far (cf. Hadley's chapter on lordship in the Danelaw, which is not a well-integrated argument).

In some cases, too, this reviewer (an Old Norse specialist) felt that a firmer acquaintance with Scandinavian culture inside Scandinavia, as well as in the Viking colonies in the British Isles, might have benefitted some of the authors in this volume. I was rather astonished to learn from Matthew Innes in a generally interesting chapter that 'the ethonym "Danish" was essentially an English label for heterogeneous groups of opponents' (p. 78). In fact the adjective *danskr* is applied as an ethonym reasonably often in Norse skaldic poetry of the Viking Age, and the noun *Danir* also appears there with an ethnic reference. There are a number of other authors in this book (Hadley, Stocker in his discussion of a

Hiberno-Norse hybrid religion, and Sidebottom) who show a somewhat distant acquaintance with both Scandinavian sources and current research in Old Norse-Icelandic studies. In a work that emphasises interdisciplinarity this is unfortunate.

There were also some features of the book's organisation that could have been better handled, aside from some spelling errors and inconsistency of reference (e.g. Wormald 1998 on p. 48 = Wormald 1999 in the bibliography on p. 64). These were, on the whole minor, though some (for example Sidebottom's persistent citation of Anglo-Saxon tribal names on his maps as ending in *-na* (gen. pl. for *-an*, nom. pl.), as in *Wreocansætna*, *Magonsætna* etc.) betray a shaky grasp of Old English grammar. The organisational feature that was most unfortunate, and took up unnecessary space, was the editors' decision to have a bibliography at the end of each chapter rather than a consolidated one at the end of the book. As there was a considerable overlap in many of the authors' reference lists, a good deal of space could have been saved by an editorial act of consolidation. Finally, it was surprising, though perhaps it was a gesture of a Young Turkish kind, that the book was silent on the contributors' identities and institutional affiliations.

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Hattaway, Michael, ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture), Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2000; cloth; pp. xix, 747; 19 illustrations; RRP AUS\$80.00; ISBN 0631216685.

Most readers would probably think of a 'Companion', when that word is applied to a book, as a 'vade-mecum' (*OED*), i.e. a handbook or guidebook. This book is often far too difficult to function as such. It is also – it has to be said – too disorderly. Specialist academics will probably feel no less disoriented than the beginner in wondering just what the purpose of this gathering of essays is. It is not, in general, the quality of those (there are 59 of them in addition to the Introduction) which is the trouble, but rather the nature of the selection, and the lack of a firm, clearly intelligible arrangement.

As Shakespeare is absent, it would have been useful to make that clear in the title. Admittedly, the absence of his name did not seem to matter greatly

in the case of *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* (1990), a very successful and admirable book also edited by Hattaway, together with A.R. Braunmuller. But while most readers probably understand ‘Renaissance Drama’ to exclude Shakespeare, they cannot necessarily be expected to think in the same way about a book on ‘Renaissance Literature and Culture’ – an area so wide that the omission of Shakespeare seems odd. The gap is not only damaging to Shakespeare: it reduces the effectiveness of much else which is discussed. As one of the contributors, Rowland Wymer, puts it in a very good essay on Jacobean drama: ‘There was a continuous artistic dialogue between [Shakespeare] and his fellow playwrights and we must not listen to only one side of the exchange’ (p. 547). One suspects that the exclusion of Shakespeare as a topic for discussion in this book is ultimately due to the fact that the Blackwell Companions already include *A Companion to Shakespeare* and *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*.

I feel that there is a lack of clear focus in what *is* presented. This is not the fault of individual contributors, but of the publishers and the editor. In a book on ‘literature’ on the one hand and ‘culture’ (used in the now current ‘broad’ sense) on the other, one expects firm integration of those two concepts, or, if that proved impossible, an explanation why. Thus, in turning to some of the literary discussions under ‘Readings’ (the editor’s term), one finds competent analyses of, for example, Wyatt’s ‘Who so list to hunt’ (Rachel Falconer) and Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (A.J. Piese) but both of them are, in essence, conventional exercises in exegesis which are not markedly influenced by considerations of ‘culture’ such as many now consider essential (see p. 663), and which one would certainly expect in a book dedicated to literature *and* culture. Indeed, although Falconer makes some comments on the Egerton MS in which Wyatt’s poem appears, she does not seem to me particularly well-acquainted with either that cultural object (to use a current phrase) or with scholarship on it. This book provided an opportunity to show sceptics like myself why, for example, a new historicist approach is indispensable to an understanding of literary texts, but it has not been seized.

What choice guides the ‘Readings’? It is truly hard to see. There is nothing wrong with *The Spanish Tragedy*, but I cannot see why it has been ‘privileged’ over many other plays that might have been chosen instead, or – in a book on Renaissance literature – should have been included *as well*. With all due respect to the contributors of the thirteen analyses, the selection seems to me nothing other than a haphazard jumble.

Also, some of these papers might just as well – or perhaps more appropriately – be included in one of the other sections. The excellent chapter ‘Translations of the Bible’ (Gerald Hammond) is hardly a ‘reading’: it is, in fact, the kind of survey that is eminently appropriate for a ‘Companion’, and could have appeared under ‘Contexts and Perspectives, c. 1500-1650’. On the other hand, ‘The Critical Elegy’ (John Lyon) – also not a ‘reading’ – would have been more logically placed under ‘Genres and Modes’.

The dustjacket promises a ‘survey of English Renaissance literature and culture’. But, although many aspects of ‘culture’ are indeed covered, it is quite exaggerated to claim that we are given a survey of it. And in the case of ‘literature’ that is even more true. Thus under ‘Genres and Modes’ one finds – as one might expect in a ‘Companion’ – a paper on ‘Love Poetry’ (Diana E. Henderson). As far as it goes, this does offer a survey, and an intelligent and well-judged one at that. However, presumably the author was told to steer clear of Donne, because she says: ‘To others in this volume, I leave the wit and passion of John Donne ...’ (p. 388). Donne is indeed discussed in more than one place outside Henderson’s paper, but never in such a way as to fill the gap in her survey.

All this, it must be strongly emphasised, is not to complain about the quality of the essays offered, but about the book *as a book*. To give a little more idea of the range and quality of the papers, I mention a few others I have myself found interesting: N.F. Blake’s ‘The English Language of the Early Modern Period’ is an exemplary introduction to its subject: quite the sort of thing that most readers of English Renaissance literature (or students of its culture), at any level, can benefit from. The paper by Jean E. Howard, ‘Was There a Renaissance Feminism?’, struck me as a good deal more subtle and carefully thought through than some of her other work. This appears in a section of ‘Issues and Debates’, which contains some lively explorations, though I was disappointed by Margo Hendricks’ ‘Race: A Renaissance Category?’, which offers a commendable account of the meaning of the word in the Renaissance, but does not tackle such questions as ‘Was Shakespeare – or is “the Shakespearean text” – racist in its attitude to e.g. Shylock and/or Othello?’

All in all, though the book seems to me to lack unity and comprehensiveness, it contains easily enough good material to warrant inclusion in academic libraries.

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Helgerson, Richard, *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2000; cloth; pp. 238; 23 b/w illustrations; RRP US\$29.00; ISBN 0226326241.

In his much-lauded book, *Forms of Nationhood* (1992), Richard Helgerson undertook an ambitious and distinctly original project, namely to illustrate the ways in which a wide range of cultural genres in early modern English society – from law books to cartography, from Elizabethan popular theatre to ecclesiastical debates – all contributed to the self-definition of the English nation-state. Helgerson did not simply demonstrate the importance of ‘minor genres’ as cultural artifacts. Arguably more far-reaching was his role as a leading figure in establishing the need to foreground political and social issues in literary study; ‘literary works’, he argued, ‘are deeply implicated in the values and desires of the cultures that produce and consume them’ (*New York Review of Books*, September 24, 1992).

In *Adulterous Alliances*, his first book since *Forms of Nationhood*, Helgerson is no less ambitious, exploring a formidable range of works from Tudor-Stuart drama and pamphlet-writing to the plays of Lope de Vega and Calderón in Golden Age Spain, Dutch genre painting, and, ultimately, the writing and art of Enlightenment and Revolutionary France and other European nations. Helgerson’s study is wide-ranging, erudite and gripping; his thesis, a fascinating one: that these diverse cultural manifestations were linked by their underlying concern with issues of common, individual selfhood – of the evolution of the concept of the citizen, from a civic, or otherwise collective, plebeian identity to the modern ideals, at once universal and individualistic, of liberty and common dignity. At the heart of Helgerson’s exploration lies the ideal of the *nonaristocratic* home as the *locus* for conflict between an emerging, and in some instances absent, but nonetheless normative, male subject, and the monarchical state and its representatives.

The first section, ‘On the Margins of History’, includes discussion of the diverse responses to the murder of Thomas Arden, the treatment of Jane Shore by a range of early modern historians and popular writers, and by Shakespeare, and the intersections of emergent discourses of civic identity and concerns with female sexuality and witchcraft as presented in Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Helgerson examines the intersections between a cult of monarchy, promoted as the exclusive concern of history, and a counter-version, ‘an emerging bourgeois cult of home and community’, displaced at that time by

humanist and aristocratic interests, but which would one day replace these as a social ethos.

The second section, 'At Home in the Dutch Republic', concerns Dutch genre painting. It is a mark of Helgerson's scholarship that this material is not only explored alongside chapters about literary works, but that it makes for a highly readable and compelling account of the tensions and conflicts of the Dutch republic in the mid-seventeenth century, conflicts which Helgerson demonstrates were centred on the nonaristocratic, burgher home, and the women who were endowed with the material identity of the home and, by extension, the state.

The next section, 'Fables of Absolutism', includes a brief but stimulating chapter on the peasant honour plays of Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca. Helgerson's explicit connection between Tudor-Stuart citizens, Dutch householders and Spanish peasants as collectivities of individuals defined as members of specific *localities*, and associated, moreover, with the threatened integrity of their (feminised) homes, is worth the price of the book. More intriguingly, he defends the idea that these diverse genres of 'domestic drama', 'genre painting' and so forth, were only introduced much later; indeed, that there was 'little acknowledgement and no sustained discussion' of the challenges that these genres posed the dominant ethos or culture of the elite (pp. 125-6).

Helgerson displays a characteristically dispassionate historical vision which would be familiar to former readers when he considers the political implications of excess and ambiguity in the drama of Lope and Calderón. If plays of sexualised political conflict between dignified peasants and villainous noblemen, who die for their abuses, raise the exhilarating possibility of revolutionary ideals in early modern Spain; if the monstrous nobleman presents the possibility of a communal audience united in embracing ideals of common dignity; Helgerson underlines that 'where everyone is moved, no one is implicated', while the dramatic emphasis on the private, domestic world of home and marriage 'enables sympathy but limits change' (pp. 146-7). Although my own reading of these plays and their political implications is more radical, and more explicitly geared towards the dynamics of gender in the audience, I must acknowledge that Helgerson's is a well-grounded, incisive and compelling argument.

The sixth and last chapter, 'From *Tartuffe* to the French Revolution' concerns art and writing in late eighteenth-century France and other European nations, from the paintings of Jean-Baptiste Greuze to the writing of Beaumarchais, Diderot, Rousseau and others. It opens with a fascinating discussion of the numerous adaptations, in the decades surrounding the French

Revolution, of Calderón's most famous play of peasant honour, *El alcalde de Zalamea*. Helgerson proceeds to examine the development of French drama in the age of Diderot, in its various responses to the example of Molière; he focuses particularly on the treatment of the male bourgeois figure. Helgerson illustrates that it was not merely that the bourgeois male evolved from fool to hero, but, more to the point, that he could be the model adopted by a new breed of self-conscious artists in their role as spokesmen for a universal subject or citizen. Helgerson shows that, in aesthetic terms, this universality underpinned the writers' decision to tame the narrative extremism of preceding drama, in order to create a domestic drama of the everyday.

Helgerson's take on the issue of domesticity is remarkably fresh perhaps for the author's arguably brave decision to postpone, until his intriguing epilogue, the issue of the place of women as subjects and the inherent analogies between aristocratic and (patriarchal) burgher/bourgeois concepts of femininity and home. He justifies his elision, by arguing that 'it was precisely when domestic drama, painting and fiction became conscious of themselves as the platform for a reforming and eventually even for a revolutionary political force that they shied away from their identification with women' (p.191).

Confronted with such a tantalizing coda, I wished this book could be more expansive, perhaps an unjust expectation to have of a study that covers – and carries, with such erudition and elegance – as much material as it does. One other minor inconvenience is that, while the subject index is extremely helpful, the reader is forced to comb through it for secondary references in the absence of a bibliography.

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Hen, Yitzhak, ed., *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder* (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 1), Turnhout, Brepols, 2001; cloth; pp. viii, 214; RRP EUR50.00; ISBN 2503510914.

In common with almost all *Festschriften*, this volume comprises a brief eulogistic preface by the editor (who sets the tone by comparing Amnon Linder to Alcuin of York), followed by a number of essays (13 in this case) by various

scholars (all disciples, as it would seem, of the dedicatee) together with a definitive list of his published writings. To review the entire range of such a collection in the small compass available here is difficult: while the focus or epicentre, as it were, is the interface between Christians and Jews in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the collection spreads itself much more widely than that and the essays range far in time and space. In general the sequence is chronological, the first paper opening with an examination of Egeria's pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 381-4, and the last dealing with a curious incident that took place in Notre-Dame de Paris in 1493. But law, liturgy, and the relationship between Christians and Jews provide the collection with an interesting if elusive thematic bedrock.

It must be said that the standard is by no means even. It is not mere quibbling to say that a writer such as Michael Goodich ('Liturgy and the Foundation of Cults in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries') who can say of a priest that he 'performed' or 'conducted' the mass (pp. 155-6), or indeed that he *recited* it, does not inspire in one much confidence that he recognizes the importance of correct technical terminology in Church practice. If he can write thus loosely about something as central as the Mass, what might he not be capable of? Goodich's heedlessness of appropriate terminology and usage in writing of ecclesiastical matters is worrying.

On the other hand, two articles strike this reviewer as outstanding. Joseph Ziegler's 'Text and Context: On the Rise of Physiognomic Thought in the Later Middle Ages' is a brilliant and lucid review of the influence of this extraordinary psychological pseudo-science as a necessary classifying tool to 'enable people to pass an immediate judgment concerning people they met for the first time in social, commercial or political circumstances' (p. 182). Ziegler fully appreciates the inevitable tension between the rigidity of physiognomic analysis, on the one hand, and, on the other, the whole edifice of Christian moral theology with its doctrine of free will and the potentiality for personal change and development, both for good and for ill. He treats medieval attempts at synthesis with respect and sympathy. As well he might: we who live in an age of crystals, horoscopes and enneagrams can hardly dare to pour scorn on the occasional medieval indulgence in dubious attempts to pin down life's uncertainties.

The other admirable piece is Aviad Kleinberg's 'Depriving Parents of the Consolation of Children: Two Legal *Consilia* on the Baptism of Jewish Children'. Given the importance of questions of religion and ethnicity in the world today it seems hard to believe that a scholar could approach a subject

such as this without admitting at least some modern resonances, yet Kleinberg's article is masterly in both its breadth and its generosity. He manages to achieve an empathy with the theology-driven mentality of Christian leaders who are genuinely passionate about their responsibility to proselytize, while naturally recognizing the depth of Jewish suffering and the enormity of the injustices they often endured.

This collection is uneven, perhaps, but these two articles alone more than justify its existence and do great honour to the man who inspired it.

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Hudson, Anne, ed., *The Works of a Lollard Preacher: the Sermon Omnis plantacio, the Tract Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere and the Tract De oblatione iugis sacrificii*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, for the Early English Text Society, 2001; cloth; pp. lxxiv, 397; 4 b/w plates; RRP US\$72.00; ISBN 0197223206.

The Wycliffite who, Professor Hudson argues, wrote all three texts edited in this volume, was a peripatetic preacher, politically aware, 'familiar with contemporary debate in Oxford' (p. liii) and prepared to disparage it. In the course of his tract on the Eucharist, *De oblatione iugis sacrificii* (1413), he mockingly says 'men be not 3it determened in Oxeford hou3 an accident schal be discriued or diffinid' (pp. 246/276-8). Hudson considers four possible contenders for authorship of the three texts, Peter Payne, William Taylor, John Purvey and Richard Wyche, but regretfully concludes that a persuasive case cannot be made for any of them. While we should unquestionably like to know which Lollard preacher these are the works of (or three works of), the importance of this volume is that three major texts (some 60,000 words) have now been added to the reliably-edited portion of the Wycliffite canon.

De oblatione iugis sacrificii exists in a single copy, but editing the sermon on clerical property *Omnis plantacio* (Matt. 15:13) [Egerton Sermon] and the related tract *Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere* (1 Cor. 3:11) [Lambeth Tract] must have been a nightmare. The clarity of the introduction to these texts and of the form in which they are presented was surely achieved at the cost of some dark moments. As Hudson says, she had previously (1992)

argued, in the context of a discussion of variable texts, that the Egerton Sermon (ca. 1409) preceded the Lambeth Tract, but here she dates the latter ca. 1401-7. She admits, however, that the question of precedence is still a matter of the balance of probabilities.

Wherever possible, the two texts are presented in parallel on facing pages, having 'equal status as independent works' (p. xlv), but they are sufficiently different to require that they be lineated independently. Sometimes one text runs for several pages with no equivalent in the other; they are neither variant forms of one text nor two quite separate texts. Inevitably this makes it slightly difficult for the reader to find her way around at first, particularly in the apparatus and the notes, which are enormously knowledgeable and very substantial. Understandably there is a very occasional error in numeration, in spite of highly scrupulous attention to detail. Given the length and complexity of the texts, a précis of their contents would have been helpful.

As Hudson observes, the three texts all 'emphatically and even flamboyantly' demonstrate Wycliffite sympathies (p. lv): virulent anti-fraternalism, disaffection with the pope and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, belief in the absolute authority of scripture. They are not, however, characteristic of Wycliffite texts in their focus on a single issue. The Lambeth Tract concludes with a properly-documented collection of 'autoritees of holy scripture and holy doctouris in Latyn azens the seculer lordeschip of prestis' (pp. 146-53); naturally this is not included in the Egerton Sermon, and overall there is a surprising shortage of references to canon law in these texts (which makes Purvey an unlikely author). Presumably the writer of the Lambeth Tract expects his readership to include other Wycliffite *clerks*, who will be able to make use of the authorities provided in their own preaching and writing, as well as 'symple men of wit'.

How simple, though? Fiona Somerset points out that Wycliffite writers 'distance themselves from the institutional clergy they criticize and ally themselves with the laity, yet continue to employ the kinds of sophisticated argument that grant them clerical legitimacy' (*Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England*, pp. 12-13). In spite of the gestures towards an attentive audience in the Egerton Sermon, an English hearer or reader with little education would find any of these texts exceptionally demanding, even with the opportunity for studying them at leisure. If the audience of the Egerton Sermon was a Lollard *schola* or *conuenticula*, as Hudson has suggested ('A Wycliffite Scholar of the Early Fifteenth Century', 1985, p. 302), the scholars must afterwards have been carefully led through the text by a Wycliffite *clerk*.

Supposing ‘symple men of wit’ are part of the intended readership, all three texts also seem to address a Latin-educated reader who takes pleasure in the Englishing of academic discourse; who finds, perhaps, that the vernacular is better able than Latin to give voice to the position of extraclergiality Somerset indentifies. The mother-tongue can sharpen the radicalism of the ideas expressed by defamiliarising academic Latin idiom. Perhaps one of Hudson’s contenders for authorship of these texts is writing not only for *lewed* readers but also, and as much, for the other three contenders, and for Oxford and Oxford-educated Wycliffites and Wycliffite sympathisers. After all, preaching to the converted does not have to involve condescension.

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International Medieval Bibliography Online, Turnhout, Brepols Publishers, 2002; Web service; RRP EUR750.00 p.a. (institutional, three simultaneous users), EUR300.00 p.a. (personal).

Founded in 1967, the *International Medieval Bibliography* is probably the foremost bibliography for medievalists – or it might be, if we could agree quite what that label covers. In terms of the historical period covered by the *IMB*, the European Middle Ages span the centuries from c. 400-1500. The *IMB* sets itself the ambitious task of regularly surveying some 4,500 periodicals and as many more miscellaneous volumes, and classifying them according to its comprehensive indexing system, in order to put before medievalists bibliographical details of the enormous range of material published throughout the world under the umbrella of medieval studies. To date, the bibliography comprises some 300,000 records, and according to the publisher’s advertisement, 25,000 new entries are being added in 2002. As impressive as these figures are, they are also more than a little daunting for anyone planning to search the bibliography, or trying to keep abreast of developments in a number of fields. Now, to speed up at least the searching process, there is *IMB-Online*.

It seems unarguable that electronic bibliographies are vastly superior to printed forms. They have greatly enhanced search capabilities, and they can be updated both more regularly and in a more incremental fashion than their print cousins. Perhaps because of that, they can also be rather seductive. Anyone

reading a printed bibliography knows it is out of date, even the day it arrives in the library – as out of date as any dictionary or encyclopedia. But there is, with electronic media, a temptation to forget that. Regular updates – in the case of the *IMB*, every quarter – bewitch us with their immediacy, and we can sometimes invest them with a completeness that they neither claim nor deserve. Perhaps the primary search screen of any electronic bibliography needs a warning inscription; not quite ‘abandon hope’, but something that reminds the user of its incompleteness.

That reflection is significant with respect to the *IMB-Online*, both because of its reputation for comprehensiveness, and because its search screens do not make obvious what its present coverage is. Some journals are up to date as far as 1999; others are left behind at 1995. Conducting a search for all articles published in 2000 yields only one hit; for 2001 there are none. It is important to remember, therefore, that in a sense a resource such as this is always ‘under construction’.

Users who are familiar with other online bibliographies (MLA and ABELL are obvious comparisons) may find at least one peculiar feature with the search screen – it lacks a keyword search. Curiously, the help screen displays just such a search field, which encouraged me to expect such a facility, but if it exists it is well hidden. The omission of a keyword search is unfortunate to say the least.

The search screen is otherwise comparable with other bibliographies and databases in its provision of differentiated simple and advanced searches, and its use of Boolean operators and wildcards. It does not permit proximity searches, but they are of more use in text databases than bibliographies.

What is distinctive about the *IMB*'s search capability is the provision of ‘browselists’ corresponding to each of the search fields (although some of these will not be available until 2003). The ‘browselist’ is an alphanumeric listing of all the terms by which materials are indexed for the relevant field. In theory at least, rather than having to guess what index terms might lead to the information being sought, it is possible to scroll through and select, singly or in combination, a range of indexed terms. The concept, I think, is an intelligent and practical one, facilitating quite sophisticated and refined searches. The criticism I have of it – which may be quite easily remedied – is that use of the lists depends on prior knowledge of how they are constructed. Eventually, users can find online descriptions of the construction of these lists which point out that two different indexing techniques are used, from which it is possible to deduce different search strategies that are needed or possible. As a simple

illustration of the need to use the right search terms, consider the ‘Century’ search field. Enter the word ‘thirteen’, and there are no hits; enter ‘13th’ and there are none; try the paleographer’s ‘s.xiii’ or just plain ‘xiii’ and there are no results. Only ‘13’ produces the desired result – 72,500 of them. It may be objected that ‘13’ is the most obvious entry for the field, but the others are by no means improbable. Similarly, enter ‘Troilus and Criseyde’ in the subject field and no hits are returned, although the same term in the ‘All Index Terms’ field returns 390 hits. It is by no means clear why ‘Troilus and Criseyde’ is not considered a subject term, but the result is that the browselists are only useful to the extent that one can anticipate the indexed terms. It seems likely that many users will fall back on the ‘All Index Terms’ field as a keyword search by default.

It needs to be acknowledged, though, that these are technical difficulties that can readily be overcome, and though they detract at the moment from the ease with which this bibliography can be used, they do not call into question the splendid resource that the *IMB-Online* will be. And if using the bibliography, even briefly for a trial, causes some pangs of guilt at the treasures that remain unread, that is scarcely the fault of the treasury or of the treasurers.

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Johnson, Jeffrey, *The Theology of John Donne* (Studies in Renaissance Literature 1), Cambridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2001; paper; pp. xiv, 162; RRP US\$29.95; ISBN 0859916200.

First published in 1999, Jeffrey Johnson’s study aims to fill a large gap in Donne scholarship. As Johnson remarks, ‘critics have neglected Donne as a theologian in his own right who is worthy of study in the development of seventeenth-century theology and in the history of the Church of England’ (p. ix). Focusing on Donne’s sermons, Johnson portrays Donne as a thinker both traditional and original, who sought to develop a truly catholic theology within the embattled context of seventeenth-century English religion. The ‘clear theological vision’ which emerges from the whole body of sermons is, says Johnson, ‘Donne’s own eclectic *via media*’ (p. x).

Johnson’s first and longest chapter, ‘So Steepy a Place’, forms the strongest part of his study. The chapter emphasizes the communal nature of the Trinity in Donne’s thought, and in this respect Donne seems to anticipate certain

features of modern Trinitarian theology. In the Church, human beings are able to participate in something akin to the divine community. Johnson explores Donne's Augustinian view of the *vestigia Trinitatis* in the human soul, contrasting Donne's thought on this point with that of Calvin. While Johnson shows that the doctrine of the Trinity is central to the whole of Donne's theology, one might have wished that this centrality was more consistently demonstrated throughout the later chapters.

The second chapter examines Donne's theology of common and private prayer, and chapter 3, set against the background of the iconoclastic controversies, explores Donne's defence of the use of images in devotion. In chapter 4 Johnson shows that Donne develops a strongly liturgical doctrine of repentance. Here especially the communal element of Donne's thought is developed in some detail.

The final chapter, 'O Taste and See', provides a fascinating discussion of Donne's theology of grace. Johnson argues that Donne's soteriology was shaped by his desire to foster ecclesiastical and theological unity. Thus Donne exhibits a rather eclectic doctrine of salvation, combining elements of Romanism, Calvinism and Arminianism. A minor flaw here, however, is that while Johnson everywhere seeks to portray Donne as a model of catholicity, he seems to fail to appreciate the fundamentally unorthodox nature of the doctrine of justification through both faith and works which he attributes to Donne. Nor is Johnson's argument that Donne accepts such a view sufficiently convincing. This weakness is amply compensated for in the concluding discussion of Donne's doctrine of the Real Presence, where the principal elements of the whole study are elegantly drawn together.

The Theology of John Donne offers both a weighty contribution to Donne scholarship, and a fascinating contribution to our understanding of the development of seventeenth-century English theology. The study is almost always grounded firmly in Donne's historical and theological contexts, providing nuanced glimpses into several of the early seventeenth-century controversies.

And for those of us who have not read Donne's *Sermons* as often as we should, not least of the book's charms is the wealth of delightful quotations from the sermons. It is to be hoped that this study will inspire further research into the theological connections between Donne's sermons and his poetry.

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Marshall, Rosalind K., *The Days of the Duchess Anne: Life in the Household of the Duchess of Hamilton 1656-1716*, Phantassie, East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 2000; paper; pp. 293; 10 colour plates, 16 b/w plates, 3 genealogical tables; RRP £14.99; ISBN 1862321116.

The title of this book can be interpreted in two ways, both of them appropriate to its content. On the one hand the ‘days’ of Anne, third Duchess of Hamilton (1632-1716) can be seen as her daily life, and a large part of this book is indeed given over to a fascinating account of the everyday lifestyle of a great noble family in their principal home. There is a chapter on that home, Hamilton Palace, another on the servants, a third on clothing and food and a fourth on entertainment, travel, recreation and celebrations. On the other hand, the ‘days’ of Duchess Anne are ‘the days of her life’, her appointed days on this earth, to use an old-fashioned phrase, and this book also provides a biography of a truly remarkable woman – born in the days of Charles I, living through the Civil War and the Commonwealth, the Restoration, the Glorious Revolution, the Union of Scotland and England and the coming of the Hanoverians – who, with extraordinary energy, set about restoring the fortunes and standing of one of the great ducal families of Scotland.

The Days of the Duchess Anne was originally Rosalind K. Marshall’s Edinburgh University PhD thesis and was then published by Collins in 1973. Now it has reappeared in a handsome reprint by Tuckwell Press. In the intervening years, Marshall has gone on to publish a number of books, including lives of Mary, Queen of Scots (1986, reprinted 2000), Bonnie Prince Charlie (1988), Henrietta Maria (1990), Elizabeth I (1991), Elizabeth of Bohemia (1998) and John Knox (2000) as well as more general books such as her *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland from 1080-1980* (1983). Clearly *The Days of the Duchess Anne* was only the beginning of a distinguished career which has included much writing about prominent women. One starting point for considering this first work by an important historian is to go back to the original reviews of its first publication. Though these were generally favourable, two mentioned the lack of economic or financial details: the *Times Literary Supplement’s* anonymous reviewer in April 1974 complained that this is ‘social history with the economics left out’ and asks for ‘more figures, or at least an explanation of why exact totals were not available’ while B.N. Horn in the *Scottish Historical Review* of 1975 suggested that ‘An omission is a section on the financial background, which would have been welcome to show how the Hamilton estates recovered from confiscation under the Commonwealth, how the money was raised for the

rebuilding of Hamilton Palace, and the part played by the duchess herself in managing the estate...’ These would no doubt have been interesting but it seems a bit hard to ask even more of a book which already offers so much. I cannot help feeling that these comments owe something to the idea that Marshall exhibits a typically female, and therefore narrow, view of history. Certainly such an idea seems to be strongly implied in Horn’s somewhat condescending comment that ‘Dr Marshall however concentrates on the feminine interest in spending money rather on the more masculine task of earning it’. We have travelled a long way since 1973 and I doubt that many reviewers today would offer such an interpretation. Furthermore it seems a very strange comment to make in relation to a book in which the Duke and his wayward son are conspicuous spenders. Horn also regrets, as did Marshall, the absence of a inventory of furniture in the Hamiltons’ houses but in the reprint Marshall is able to report that she has since discovered such an inventory and has rewritten the chapter on Hamilton Palace.

Elizabeth Jane Howard, writing perhaps from the perspective of a novelist in the *Spectator* of December 1973, wanted more quotation from letters to bring the Hamiltons alive as people although she acknowledged that the book ‘is rather about times than lives’. This is not how it struck me on first reading the book. Rather I would suggest that Marshall has achieved a good balance between the two meanings of ‘the days of the Duchess Anne’. It needs to be remembered that the book is based on a detailed examination of the family archives of the Dukes of Hamilton. These are by their nature quite diverse – Marshall describes them as ‘letters, accounts, charters, memoranda and lists’ (p. 11) – and her skill lies not only in extracting a set of characters and a narrative from the letters but also in using the whole huge range of documents to recreate the daily details of living.

As it happens there *is* a narrative, a story to tell, and it is an interesting one. After she had married William, Earl of Selkirk, who emerges from this book as an admirable support to her, the Duchess and her husband began not only to rebuild the family fortunes and the family house but also to plan how the family could continue to play a key role in Scottish society in the person of their feckless son and heir James. They wanted to rebuild the house of Hamilton in both senses of the word ‘house’; the two aspects of what Marshall calls ‘The Grand Design’ went hand in hand. Unfortunately James had a quite different view of his role from that held by his parents. He had little interest in Scotland and was more attached to France than any other place. His role in the negotiations over the Union was not impressive and he eventually died in a sordid duel over matters of no great importance. Fortunately the Duchess lived another four years after his

death, long enough to send her grandson the fifth Duke off to Eton rather than educating him in Scotland, a final sign of her lifelong ability to move with the times. This is good story and it is well told, but by placing it in a study of life in a great noble household Marshall is able to show us not just the abiding human interest of the intergenerational gap but also the precise ways in which a great noble of seventeenth century Scotland envisaged her role, from her hospitality to her clothing, from her plans to express the grandeur of the Hamiltons through building a new palace to her attempts to play a role in the changing politics of her time. In every sense, then, the Duchess's 'days' were well worth recreating and the reprinting of Rosalind Marshall's account of them is extremely welcome.

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Mostert, Marco, ed., *New Approaches to Medieval Communication* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 1), Turnhout, Brepols, 1999; paper; pp. viii, 318; RRP EUR35.00; ISBN 2503508146.

This, the first volume in a new series of studies of literacy in the Middle Ages, reveals the breadth of approach that is the hallmark of the series, which has now produced two other volumes and a CD-ROM. Much of the research published by the series comes from the interdisciplinary groups at Utrecht's 'Pionierproject Verschriftelijking' and the Sonderforschungsbereich 231 at Münster. A characteristic of all the papers in the Mostert volume, and of the series' general approach, is that literacy is not only assessed against orality, or non-literacy, but also against all other forms of human social communication, with the result that literacy *qua* literacy is not overvalued nor considered in isolation from other forms of communication. All five essays in Part II of the volume benefit from this broad approach, whether they are discussing the audience of hagiographical texts in early medieval Auxerre, Utrecht and Würzburg, or the introduction of writing into central Europe or points between these two geographical areas.

As befits the introductory volume of a series, this one begins with a short introduction by one of the pioneers of studies in medieval literacy, Michael Clanchy. He reviews past achievements in the field, summarises the special place of the series in medieval literacy research, and suggests some urgent future directions of study. The volume is divided into three parts, Clanchy's essay and

a much longer one by Marco Mostert forming the Introductory Part I, which is followed by Part II, comprising five essays by practitioners of the Utrecht approach on quite different subjects and geographical regions of the medieval world. Part III comprises a 'Bibliography of Works on Medieval Communication' of just over 100 pages by Marco Mostert, which ranges very widely across many topics and approaches to the subject. Although now inevitably a little out of date, it is a very useful resource, especially as it is divided into sixteen different subject areas, and comes with both a subject index (pp. 297-303) and an index of modern authors and editors (pp. 304-18).

All five essays in Part II and Mostert's Introduction are excellent in different ways. Mostert sets out very effectively the kinds of questions that should inform research into medieval communication, which are paralinguistic and social as well as linguistic. He also reviews the twentieth-century development of cross-cultural research in literacy, and, valuably, looks at the various words used in several languages, including English and German, to discuss phenomena around the adoption of the written word in human societies, pointing out that the choice of terms themselves both reflects a particular conception of the phenomena under discussion and influences that discussion.

In Part II there are lively essays on the following subjects: the audience of hagiographical texts, by Wolfert S. Van Egmond; the preservation context of medieval letters (and the likelihood that most such witnesses have disappeared), by Mary Garrison; the use (or lack of use) of written charters in a variety of court cases in the former Carolingian Empire north of the Alps in the ninth and tenth centuries, by Karl Heidecker; the importance of the gesture of coronation, rather than words both oral and written, in legitimising Carolingian and Ottonian rulers, by Mariëlle Hageman; and a most informative essay by Anna Adamska on the introduction of writing into Poland, Hungary and Bohemia.

These essays throw up a number of the distinguishing characteristics of medieval societies that make them both fascinating and difficult to study. We see that many of the paralinguistic questions that Mostert identifies in his Introduction cannot be answered fully or only with difficulty, because various kinds of evidence are missing or must be inferred from other material. For example, many kinds of letters were only preserved by chance unless they happened to concern the powerful and to interest ecclesiastics, so it is difficult to gauge the extent of letter-writing between other sectors of society. However, some archaeological material partially fills out the picture. Again, another kind of uncertainty concerns the extent to which Latin as an oral language was comprehensible to the laity in

the Romance world in the early Middle Ages, and the period when it ceased to be so. This uncertainty makes it hard to assess the extent of the likely use of the vernacular in preaching and instruction of the laity, so the researcher must turn to other kinds of evidence to help. Other fascinating examples show that one cannot assume that a written text had ultimate authority in legal or regnal controversies, even though written texts were produced, along with other evidence, to support a case. Often non-written acts, such as the use of compurgation or the carrying out of a non-verbal rite, had greater force in medieval communities.

To sum up: this book is both useful and informative and will help break down cultural stereotypes of what 'literacy' and 'communication' mean to us and what they meant in medieval societies. The only drawbacks this reviewer noticed were a rather high number of typographical errors and, sometimes, an unidiomatic use of English.

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O'Meara, Carra Ferguson, *Monarchy and Consent: The Coronation Book of Charles V of France, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. VIII* (Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History 27), London/Turnhout, Harvey Miller, 2001; cloth; pp. 372; 107 b/w illustrations, 39 colour plates; RRP EUR 105.00; ISBN 1872501109.

The *Coronation Book of Charles V* is a wonderful manuscript now in the British Library, containing one of the fullest visual records of the *sacre* rituals. It is a manuscript notable for its richly detailed illuminations that depict in great detail the coronations of both Charles V and his wife Jeanne de Bourbon. These lively illustrations are notable for their attention to capturing likenesses of the principal protagonists and for the care with which the different elements of the coronation are represented. There are 38 surviving miniatures, 28 for the coronation of Charles and nine for Queen Jeanne, originally there were 44. The work can, unusually, be precisely dated. A colophon to the text records that Charles V ordered the work 'to be compiled, corrected, transcribed and illuminated in 1365'.

Carra O'Meara's study is the first modern examination focused on the manuscript since its publication in facsimile in 1899 by E.S. Dewick. The work has been discussed by those interested in the development of kingship and the

coronation ritual and, most notably, by Claire Richter Sherman in her studies on the representations of Charles V and the iconography of queenship. O'Meara came to examine the work while doing research into the realism of the Parement Master, and one of her major contributions in this text is the locating of the artist within the milieu of the Valois Court and the work of the favoured artists of both Jean le Bon and Charles V. Her knowledge of their work and her careful reading of the *Coronation Book* lead her to draw connections between the Master of the Coronation Book with such artists as the Parement Master and Girard d'Orléans and to artists such as the painter of the Sainte-Chapelle panel.

O'Meara takes the unusual step of locating her discussions concerning the identification of the artist, his artistic milieu and the structure of the book in the last three chapters. She also includes a comprehensive catalogue of the texts and images in the manuscript, while the book also contains complete colour reproductions of all the miniatures.

In the first part of her study, O'Meara examines the uncertainties of succession in the period preceding the actual coronation, with the crisis following the accession of Philip VI Valois when the principle of primogeniture was no longer universally accepted. There were other rivals to the throne, including the kings of England and Navarre. In addition, during the lengthy imprisonment of Jean le Bon by the English, the role of Charles as dauphin was also challenged, and at the same time, the institution of the monarchy itself was being challenged by the emergence of citizens' advocates and elective assemblies. While not an explanation, these insecurities make comprehensible some of the anxieties that might have led to the production of such a fulsome account of the coronation. It is a work that anchors the rituals, and thus kingship, in tradition. The actual manuscript includes earlier versions of the ceremony, in particular the *Ordo* of 1250, while the text itself incorporates elements from earlier French *ordines*, as well as those from other realms. The result is a manuscript that was a representation of an ideology of sovereignty both secular and religious in character, enacted through the transformative ritual of anointing with the Celestial Balm, recognised and supported by the Church and laity, many of whom were identified within the manuscript through armorial devices and portraiture. This very specificity reinforced the legitimacy of Charles' claim to the throne. The work reinforces the Salian Laws, while the elevation of the queen's coronation transforms her into a figure who also occupies the sacred and secular realms and, as a consequence, confirms the claims of the sons born of such a authority-laden union.

The miniatures operate as a visual commentary to the text, underscoring

and developing its message of continuity and sacral kingship. The artist was able to respond to and elaborate themes found within legal, literary and historical texts, as O'Meara demonstrates in her overview of his career. The Master of the Coronation book illustrated the works of Aristotle and Guillaume de Machaut. O'Meara argues that the sophisticated interchange between text and illustration was informed by an intellectual as well as artistic collaboration between the artist and the compilers of the text, whom she suggests may be the theologian Jean Golein, the liturgist Guillaume de Machaut and the leigist Jean de Dorman.

This is an exhaustive study that draws on the historical investigations into coronation *ordines*, the examination of political thought in the reigns of Jean le Bon and Charles V, as well as the art historical research into fourteenth-century French art. O'Meara's book highlights the intrinsic interconnection between picture and word and how the ignoring of one diminishes our understanding of the other, especially in a manuscript where text and image were planned as a coherent unit. This is a thorough, readable and comprehensive study of value to anyone interested in French politics and art, as well as an invaluable elucidation of this important historical manuscript.

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Quinn, William A., ed., *Chaucer's Dream Visions and Shorter Poems* (Basic Readings in Chaucer and His Time 2), New York, Garland, 1999; boards; pp. xvi, 487; RRP US\$85.00; ISBN 0815331002.

This volume is the second in the Garland series Basic Readings in Chaucer and His Time. In keeping with the design of that series, it provides reprints of 'significant essays in the field' that have appeared in the last 50 years, principally in order to compile a 'first book' for students, in this case within the areas of Chaucer's dream visions and shorter poems. As much as anything, as both William Quinn and the series editors suggest, the compilation of a book such as this is a response to 'changed library acquisitions policies'; whether or not it achieves its stated aim of alleviating 'the anxiety that waiting for recalled books or for interlibrary loans can cause' is a moot point. The creation of an apparently indispensable introductory book may do as much to exacerbate the problem of waiting for recalled books as it does to alleviate it.

Library access is one thing; pedagogical use is another, and it can be affirmed from the outset that the collection achieves its goal of providing a mixture of basic insights and provocative studies, and of illustrating a variety of schools of interpretation or critical methodologies. Indeed, the ways in which attention to these 'minor' poems has often anticipated changing currents in critical thinking is very neatly demonstrated in the concluding essay by John Ganim, the only new piece in the volume.

Having said that the volume achieves its goal, it is necessary at the same time to record it as only a qualified success. In the first, and most substantial of the headnotes that preface each section, Quinn admits that the work 'lacks the inherent cohesiveness that focussing on a single text or topic provides'. It is a rather curious admission, and deserves some further consideration. Elsewhere, Quinn describes the book's subject matter as a 'rather protean subset of Chaucer's works' and canvasses several other labels, betraying some anxiety about the relative status of these works, and the propriety of treating them together. Regrettably, that is all dismissed at the end of the headnote as a 'largely unresolved issue' – so 'unresolved', in fact, that we are told on the one hand that 'the rubric "dream visions and short poems" designates no simply defined category' and that the 'dream visions have almost nothing in common', and on the other hand that treating the 'dream visions and short poems as a unified field of inquiry has produced some of the most insightful and provocative reassessments of the poet's entire corpus'.

Underlying the comment about cohesiveness is equally some uncertainty about the generic status of dream poetry, although it is an anxiety that is not shared by the contributors whose work is included. At the simplest level, a greater measure of cohesiveness and focus would have been achieved by omitting the treatment of the 'short poems'. In the first place, two of the essays, by Green and Wimsatt (though fascinating in their own rights) scarcely provide basic readings on Chaucer's lyrics. Wimsatt's requires reasonable familiarity with the *formes fixes* of Machaut and his followers, and even more familiarity with the development of the *puys* in the late thirteenth century. Green's is more accessible for students, but it does not address Chaucer's short poems. That only leaves Lee Patterson's stimulating essay on 'Anelida and Arcite'. The point here is not that these essays are not in themselves deserving of attention; rather, leaving the 'short poems' out altogether would have allowed some focus on the generic attributes of dream poetry. Tellingly, the lengthy extract from Spearing's *Medieval Dream-Poetry* does not include any of this preliminary material, in

spite of its occupying the greater part of the section entitled 'Categorical Concerns'. There is a considerable body of critical writing which explores the nature of dream poetry – one thinks of book length studies by Heatt, Kruger, Russell, Lynch, Winny, Wendeatt, St John, and Phillips and Havelly (in addition to those excerpted here), without even venturing into the field of studies considering Langland or the *Pearl*-poet. It seems that there was scope, under a heading such as 'Categorical Concerns', for a much more considered treatment of this question.

Some other elements of this headnote disturb me. There is, for example, the suggestion that most study of Chaucer's sources tends 'to affirm the intrinsic superiority of his art'; there is the listing of 'medieval *artes*' which includes, together with the *ars dictamini* and *ars praedicandi*, the '*ars longa*'; and there is the comment in the bibliographical note that some of Chaucer's phrases 'still require literal explication and often such passages require alternative editing' – alternative, one presumes, to what we are told on the preceding page is 'the definitive critical edition'.

One of the most difficult problems with any such collection – indeed, every anthologist's nightmare – is the decision to be made about what to include and what to exclude. Quinn is aware of this, and repents what he terms his 'sins of exclusion'. Inevitably, any reviewer will be tempted to propose alternative essays or extracts for inclusion, but in reality such an exercise proves little. The real strength of any collection such as this is not solely in the materials it includes, but in the skill and thoroughness with which it directs its readers beyond its own covers. The bibliographical note certainly does that, although it might easily have provided a more substantial coverage. Equally useful in this regard is the essay of John Ganim, which provides an instructive account of how criticism of these poems can be located within changing currents of Chaucerian criticism in particular, and literary criticism in general. Placed where it is, it offers a valuable retrospect, but it could equally have been placed at the beginning and served to introduce such issues to the volume's intended audience.

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Rebhorn, Wayne A., ed. and trans., *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2000; paper; pp. viii, 332; RRP £14.95; ISBN 0801482062.

The Renaissance has long been known as ‘the age of rhetoric’, but this collection of writings on the subject demonstrates why rhetoric was such an important, and yet unsettling force within Renaissance culture. Stressing the intention that the texts should speak for themselves, Wayne Rebhorn utilises excerpts, supplementing these with explanatory notes where necessary, in order to include the broadest selection of writers possible. *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric* features 25 writers, spanning the period from Petrarch in the mid-fourteenth century to René Bary in the mid-seventeenth century. The texts range from expositions of rhetorical devices to extravagant attacks and ardent defences of rhetoric’s power. Each selection is prefaced by helpful biographical details, a brief overview of the writer’s work, and a short introduction to the selected text/s. Footnotes explain obscurities and trace sources where necessary, while the inclusion of a biographical glossary and a bibliography of works on rhetoric increase the user-friendliness of the volume. Rebhorn has modernised the spelling of English texts, and his preference for idiomatic English has ensured that even the more obscure translations remain accessible.

There is nothing monolithic about the texts included in this volume: they rehearse the disputes of classical antiquity, but illuminate the relevance of such arguments to Renaissance culture and thought. In an intelligent introduction, Rebhorn outlines the disparity between writers who assert the inherent nobility of the art of rhetoric, and those who provide grave warnings about its capacity for disrupting social order and threatening peace. Somewhere between these poles, Francis Bacon and Peter Ramus appear to justify rhetoric while, at the same time, reveal their hostility towards an art of words. Rebhorn conjectures that eloquence is easily dismissed in this way as ‘mere rhetoric’ (p. 10), due to its association with subjective rather than absolute truths. This tenuous relationship between truth and rhetoric is taken up by opponents, including Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and John Jewel, who deride rhetoric as the art of lying, declaring it to be an instrument of social disruption and the symptom of a fractured state. In response, proponents, including George of Trebizond, laud rhetoric as the great equaliser, an indicator of man’s worth, and the means of acquiring and maintaining social order. In a reversal of Mirandola’s criticism, René Bary ventures so far as to assert eloquence’s capacity for impeding man’s corruption of truth (p. 286).

Rebhorn has chosen and edited his texts carefully in order to highlight the scope of Renaissance debate about the usefulness and role of rhetoric in society. Excerpts from Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *On Rhetoric* and Francesco Patrizi's *Ten Dialogues on Rhetoric* convey a concern that the art, perfected by legal practitioners, could subordinate the unbiased discovery of truth to the lawyer's desire to 'win'. By way of contrast to such attacks, writers including Nicholas Caussin and Philip Melanchthon defend the power of rhetoric as a thing of beauty, a 'heavenly seed' capable of inspiring 'people's spirits' to feelings of divinity (p. 275). The rhetorician is thus variously imagined. For some writers, he is Pygmalion-like in his obsessive artifice and, for others, he embodies the civilising force of Orpheus' song. It is perhaps in the positioning of rhetoric as a specifically political tool, however, that these Renaissance writers distinguish themselves from the classical writers they are so heavily indebted to. While the writers of classical antiquity considered rhetoric's role within a republic, Renaissance writers responded to their own political model. Absolute sovereignty centralised the power of rhetoric in the Prince, and battled against the reality that an eloquent subject might threaten sovereignty by employing rhetoric to attack his Prince. More generally, this monarchic model was considered susceptible to corruption, providing skilled flatterers with a deceitful means of acquiring favour and status at court.

The debate surrounding rhetoric as a political tool is, for Rebhorn 'one of the most striking debates' to emerge from the volume, but the texts also reveal many other debates, even when these return to the broader political questions. Bary's *A Discourse on French Rhetoric*, for example, considers the relationship between poetry and rhetoric, while Rudolph Agricola writes more specifically on the importance of rhetoric in teaching. Regularly defamed as effeminate in his inactivity, the orator is also envisaged by numerous writers as afflicted with the disease of rhetoric, or as Bacon puts it 'a distemper of learning' (p. 267). Equally, Juan Luis Vives perceives the orator as being overwhelmed by rhetoric's tyranny, while Jacques Amyot is not alone in his philosophical reminder that it is grander to persuade than to force the will of others (pp. 129-39).

The 'debates' of this book confirm that rhetoric is indeed about subjective truths; and while its specific context is the European Renaissance, it raises universal philosophical questions about the power of speech and the association of 'art' with deception. The volume introduces its reader to a broad field of Renaissance conceptions of rhetoric and is a valuable resource for political, literary, philosophical, and theological scholars alike. While some readers might

find the use of excerpts limiting, the range of texts edited and translated here, along with Rebhorn's meticulous detailing of the textual history of each selection, make *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric* an excellent starting point for any examination of this subject.

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Simkin, Stevie, ed., *Revenge Tragedy* (New Casebooks), Houndsmill, Palgrave, 2001; hardback; pp. ix, 268; RRP £42.50; ISBN 0333922379.

The title of this anthology of previously published 'contemporary critical essays' ('contemporary', the general editors explain, in exhibiting the impact of 'modern critical theory') is in part misleading. Major revenge tragedies one would expect to see discussed are left out. Yet several of the small number of plays chosen as central are not primarily revenge tragedies. No less significantly, the essays often do not focus on revenge or issues specifically related to that. It would have been helpful to readers with an interest in the role of revenge in ancient Greek drama to use some such title as *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642*, which was used in 1940 by Fredson Bowers for what the editor acknowledges remains 'the most comprehensive survey' of revenge tragedies written in Renaissance England (p. 257). But though more specific, that title would still have been inaccurate for this book.

What about the English Renaissance plays *not* included? In note 10 on page 20 Simkin lists '[r]evenge tragedies not covered in this volume'. The list includes Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*, and Massinger's *The Duke of Milan*, as well as many other plays. It is not explained why these plays are omitted. To many people, *Hamlet* is, for all its oddities as a play in which the protagonist keeps postponing the task of revenge, the most famous revenge tragedy of all.

Possibly yet more puzzling is the *inclusion* of most of the other plays. The main ones chosen are *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* – both of course excellent choices – and, strangely, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The White Devil*, *The Changeling*, and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Not one of these plays seems to me centrally preoccupied with revenge, either in action or in

theme. Even though Bowers does include all of them, he offers a definition of revenge tragedy which to some extent justifies his choice. Simkin offers no definition of what he takes to be 'revenge tragedy' at any point, nor any reasons why *The Changeling* is a more logical play to include than *Hamlet*.

Inasmuch as discussion of *The Changeling* might have concentrated on such an element of revenge as occurs within that play, one is disappointed to find that, instead, the essays chosen (by Cristina Malcolmson and Deborah Burks) deal predominantly with feminist issues. These issues do not appear to me to be the central ones in *The Changeling*, although they certainly are significant in that play. In general, feminist criticism looms large in much of the volume, and such questions as one traditionally associates with Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy (Does the revenger have an adequate incentive for his revenge? Is revenge seen as good or evil? Is it supernaturally sanctioned?) are not extensively dealt with.

Much the best essay here, to my mind, is Michael Neill's on *'Tis Pity*, first published in 1988. He concentrates on one important moment, that of Giovanni's spectacular entry, at the end of the play, with his sister's heart impaled upon a dagger. Giovanni sees himself, triumphantly, as having succeeded in his 'revenge', though he is not very clear about just what he means by this. Neill exhaustively, knowledgeably, and penetratingly analyses the significance of the moment, discussing both the general cultural context within which it is located and its critical function within the play. His is an essay which, from any point of view, makes a truly significant addition to our understanding, and will, I predict, be of permanent value. Even so, though this is also an essay which can justifiably be included in a book on revenge tragedy, it does not lead one to think (and neither should it) that *'Tis Pity* is best seen as primarily concerned with revenge. One attraction of Neill's contribution is that, although he does incorporate 'modern critical theory' within his approach, he is not overwhelmed by it and uses it to his advantage.

If simply considered as essays rather than as parts of a book, the various papers differ greatly in quality. Karin Coddon's essay on *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1994) also focuses on a startling moment in the play, i.e. the Duke's kissing of the poisoned skull of Gloriana, which, it is contended, is an act of necrophilia. It is not, for the Duke does not know, when inflamed with lust, that he is about to kiss anything other than a living woman; therefore, much of this confused and confusing discussion is simply beside the point. By contrast, Jonathan Dollimore's essay from his *Radical Tragedy* (1984), on the same play, is clear and remarkably

free from jargon, though his argument is onesided and simplistic. Katherine Maus's piece on *The Spanish Tragedy* (1995) is in many ways a very good one indeed. But some narrowly conceived feminist essays in this book, such as those by Ania Loomba, Malcolmson and Burke, are unfortunately very predictable: women are the victims of an evil patriarchal system. Such a sweeping political approach, however accurate within its limits, ultimately obscures major differences between the characters of – for example – the Duchess in *Malfi* and Beatrice in *The Changeling*.

But then, it is not an accident that the first essay in the book is taken from J.W. Lever's *The Tragedy of State* (1971), which as the editor approvingly asserts (p. 37) is based on a conviction that art is inseparable from politics. And the study of 'character "psychology"', we are amazingly told by Simkin on p. 255, is 'now out of date' – as though modern critical theory can settle such a matter once and for all, with scientific certainty.

All in all, this anthology is inadequate as one that purports to deal with revenge tragedy. Readers interested in that genre had better turn to such works as Bowers', Eleanor Prosser's *Hamlet and Revenge*, and John Kerrigan's recent *Revenge Tragedy*. These studies, whatever their shortcomings, at least raise the major issues. The present book does provide a reasonable indication of the concerns and methods of 'modern critical theory'. The quality of the essays is uneven, but that, I fear, ultimately has more to do with the differences between individual critics than the virtues or vices of particular methodologies.

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Spolsky, Ellen, *Satisfying Skepticism: Embodied Knowledge in the Early Modern World*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001; cloth; pp. 248; 18 b/w illustrations; RRP £39.50; ISBN 0754603741.

Ellen Spolsky has written a thought-provoking book exploring how various artists and writers dealt with the scepticism of the Early Modern period by creating fiction and paintings which produce satisfaction of the senses denied by the philosophy of the day. Her fresh approach is based on the notion that modern cognitive and neurological understandings of brain functioning can explain how people react to their environments. The evolutionary advantage of the flexibility of the human brain allows it to compensate for the inadequacy

of knowledge gained through the fallible senses to produce a 'satisfying' understanding of a work of fiction. Scepticism is inevitable, she claims, but not necessarily tragic, because the flexible brain supplements the gaps which prevent the senses from grasping sure knowledge. Representation of art or fiction is thus part of this attempt to satisfy knowledge in a period overwhelmed by scepticism following the rediscovery of the writings of Sextus Empiricus.

To detail these ideas, Spolsky first discusses theories of the brain and its development, and then launches into her first close reading: that of the varieties of paintings of Doubting Thomas. She argues that 'The paintings of the story of the incredulity of Thomas teach that if painting is not the perfect way to knowledge neither is sight... Both [Caravaggio and Thomas] poke aggressively at the boundaries of knowledge, try to make flesh yield knowledge, but both ultimately fail in the face of an irreducible materiality' (p. 36). Later, she claims that 'Thomas did not, by touching the wound, touch the word' (p. 43). Quite so.

Chapters Three and Four, on *Coriolanus* and *Othello*, show how 'the contingencies of the body's need will baffle the human aspiration toward divine perfection' (p. 44). Chapter Five looks at the erotic pastoral, and Chapter Six at the comic pastoral response to scepticism in the paintings of Susanna and the Elders. Dutch landscapes are discussed in the context of the desire by artists and their viewers to find a restful place for the eyes after the scepticism spread by the reformation. Sidney's poetry and protestant tragicomedy are also analysed as the 'pyrrhonian anti-intellectual reading of our exile from knowledge' (p. 195). Throughout, Spolsky has some fine close readings of individual plays and paintings, and this is her strength. The argument that *Coriolanus* evokes the notion of Christ by the antithesis of his physical actions may be controversial to some, but is nevertheless well argued.

The difficulties are not so much in the close readings but in the fundamental assumptions. A more detailed and contextualised definition of the terms 'scepticism', 'knowledge' and 'satisfaction' would have helped. The book implies that all Europe was subsumed in epistemological angst, that reformation had brought a general distrust of the senses, and that scepticism was widespread. However, no classical or medieval author believed that total knowledge was obtained through the senses. A more nuanced approach would acknowledge that, although the perception of, for example, a broken stick in the water might be false, this did not mean that knowledge was unobtainable. The intellect, the reason, experience, memory and the various faculties combined to form knowledge, of which sensory experience might be the start but was by no means

the end of the pursuit. Aquinas may have said that we know first through the senses but knowledge, to say nothing of wisdom, was achieved through all the faculties. Although as humans we can know only through our bodies, knowledge cannot be restricted purely to the senses. Spolsky espouses a strong materialism which, while giving passing mention to the spiritual and abstract, ignores anything but physical perceptions in the ratiocinative process. This reductionist view leads to a reductionist interpretation of a uniformly sceptical Europe seeking a vaguely-defined satisfaction.

Another problem with the discussion about the reception of painting or literature is that Spolsky cites no contemporary responses. Barthes' and Cavell's interpretations of satisfaction may be valid but cannot support the argument that early modern paintings were produced, and read, as arguments about the verification of the senses. Although seventeenth-century burghers may have brought Dutch landscapes for the visual refreshment of their rural scenes, no primary evidence is provided that they did so out of angst encouraged by 'Protestant iconoclasts' demonization of bodily knowledge' (p. 146). The assumption that Protestant iconoclasm was based on the belief that the senses were defective also needs support, as does the assumption that destruction of images meant that all sense knowledge was forbidden. Protestantism was a religion of the book (visual senses) and of the word (visual and hearing). but also maintained that understanding of the word went beyond the page. It is this leap that Spolsky seems unable to make. Eyebrows may be raised at such patronising comments as "[The Reformation] was a cognitive disaster to the illiterate Christian masses whose belief was wired in their bodies by sensory knowledge' (p. 141). Without statues, it would seem, the benighted folk could not worship.

A postmodern materialism, based on cognitive science, may indeed raise interesting questions about human perception. However, as Spolsky admits, cognitive science is in its infancy. Moreover, a brain structure which evolved millennia ago can do little to explain the cultural changes that provoked, for instance, the Reformation. I remain, I am afraid, sceptical.

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St John, Michael, *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity* (Studies in European Cultural Transition), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000; boards; pp. viii, 226; RRP £45.00; ISBN 0754601226.

This volume is another in the series Studies in European Cultural Transition, which is, in the words of its General Editors, 'explicitly European and interdisciplinary, concentrating attention on the relativity of cultural perspectives, with a particular interest in issues of cultural transition'. The author's approach certainly embodies both the European and the interdisciplinary requirements of that prescription, seeking to read Chaucer's dream poems against the background of Latin, French, and Italian influences and source material, and from a perspective that is informed as much by Aristotelian and scholastic epistemology as it is by traditional literary study. After an introduction of some 20 pages, St John works through each of Chaucer's four dream poems in turn, in order, as he expresses it in his conclusion 'to explore the relationship between the mind of the individual subject, and the various dimensions of courtliness it encounters and negotiates' (p. 206).

This is a difficult book to respond to. In the chapters that deal with individual poems, there is much with which readers of Chaucer's dream poems would readily agree. St John focusses perceptively on the importance of courtliness and the courtly identity, stressing, in particular, the ways in which the individual is shaped by and within a culture context – in this case, a context that is overtly textual. His declared opposition to 'the idea of a non-subjective medieval identity' is a welcome corrective to the privileging of the Early Modern period by some of its interpreters. Equally valuable is the attention to Chaucer's intellectual sources in Boethius, Alanus, Dante, and Machaut. There is a useful suggestion that the *Parliament of Fowls* might be read against the background of the Good Parliament, and the ways in which Chaucer explores and analyzes the language of *fine amour* are also well discussed here. But for all that, this is ultimately a book that fails to satisfy, for I believe its central thesis is mistaken.

What distinguishes this study of courtly identity is the author's belief that, under the influence of Aristotelian psychology, Chaucer divides the mind of the courtly subject, describing one part that is shaped and determined from without and another that is unshaped and self-determining. These two parts of the courtier's identity he equates in turn with Aristotle's receptive and active intellects. As a necessary preliminary, St John provides a brief summary of Aristotle's teaching on cognition from *De Anima*, and of Aristotle's ideas on dreams from *Parva Naturalia*.

The passage in *De Anima* in which Aristotle deals with active intellect and receptive (passive) intellect is very brief, but notoriously difficult, and has given rise to considerable debate – so much so, that several recent commentators acknowledge this as the single most difficult problem of Aristotelian psychology. The underlying problem is to determine how the rational soul comes to know anything of the external world – in philosophical terms, how the immaterial mind can receive a representation (necessarily also immaterial) of a material object. It was in response to this that Aristotle developed his much-disputed theory of *nous poietikos* and *nous pathetikos*.

Interpretations of Aristotle (that of Aquinas is probably the most important) have often been quite extreme. Some have read the active and passive as two separate intellects, one perishable, the other permanent; some describe them as ‘components’ of the human mind, almost as if they had separate physical status; others insist that they are capacities of the mind. It is a problem that continues to receive extensive treatment by classicists and historians of philosophy, but nothing of that debate and disagreement is reflected here. The only secondary source that appears to have been used in the discussion is that of W.A. Hammond (1902) – a work that does not appear in any of the two dozen analyses of *De Anima* I consulted. In short, the treatment of active and passive intellect provided here, and elsewhere in the book, simplifies and distorts Aristotle’s complexity.

One such distortion is contained in the description of the passive intellect as ‘a storehouse of images’ (p. 9). Aristotle nowhere uses such a description. Just as Aquinas did after him, Aristotle insisted on the importance of sensory perception for cognition, asserting that no universal can be apprehended unless a particular instance of that universal has been supplied by the senses (see *De Anima* III, 7-8), but this is not to suggest that the intellect stores images. Images are undoubtedly stored, available for later recall, but it is not the passive intellect that stores them. Images of sensed objects are stored in one of the two sensory faculties – the *sensus communis* or the imagination (Aristotle and Aquinas differ in their location of retained images).

Rather than thinking of the passive intellect as a storehouse, Aristotle’s notion is more to be explained as a blank writing tablet, ready to receive intelligible forms of things without matter. Moreover, it seems a misunderstanding to suggest that the receptive intellect can be acted upon by ‘physical activity going on ... in or around the body of the dreamer’ (p. 10), in spite of Aristotle’s insistence on providing physical explanations for dreams. As it is immaterial, the receptive intellect cannot be directly acted upon by the body –

indeed, that is part of the reason why Aristotle posited the existence and operation of the active intellect.

The next step in the introductory argument is the assertion that, for Aristotle, ‘the images that a dream is composed of are derived from the receptive intellect giving up various of its contents without the normal guidance of the agent intellect’ (p. 10). No precise reference is supplied for this, although the general argument here derives from *Parva Naturalia* III, 1-2. What is clear from that treatise, though, is that Aristotle does not associate dreaming with *nous pathetikos* (a term that he only uses rarely). Aristotle explains the nature of dreams in *De Insomniis*, considering first whether they are a mode of perception, then whether they are a mode of intellection. Although he acknowledges that in a dream the senses are not functioning, and so we cannot be said to be perceiving, he is also clear that a dream is not thinking. His conclusion is that dreams are not affections of the intellectual part of the soul, but rather of the perceptual part (to *aisthetikon*) in its imagining capacity (to *phantastikon*). Such is the scholarly dispute about these terms that many now leave then untranslated. Dreams, says Aristotle, are some sort of *phantasma* (*phantasmata*) that occurs in sleep (*De Insomniis* I, 28). Although thinking requires some simultaneous awareness of *phantasmata*, nevertheless the activity of the *noetikon* is clearly distinguished from that of the *aisthetikon* or the *phantastikon*. Aristotle’s careful distinctions here would seem to preclude any possibility that dreams are connected with images stored in the receptive intellect. Rather, he treats dreams (about which he shows considerable scepticism) as the work of imagination. I do not believe, therefore, that Chaucer’s use of dream vision can be directly linked to an Aristotelian understanding of the psychology of dreams and their emergence from the receptive intellect. For that to be so would require some identification between the passive intellect and the *aisthetikon/phantastikon*, which both Aristotle and Aquinas deliberately distinguish.

The difficulties that emerge from this misunderstanding of Aristotle’s distinction between the active and passive intellect can be illustrated from two passages. In the discussion of the *House of Fame* we find the following: ‘the mind is conceived in terms of the “agent intellect” which acts upon things, making them intelligible ... and the “receptive”, or “potential intellect” which is passive, and is shaped by the agent intellect as it provides the images that are to be stored as memory’ (65). Although in a loose fashion this might seem to reflect Aristotelian thinking, it contains a number of inaccuracies. In the first place, the active intellect does not act on things. It cannot. The active intellect cannot pick up a hammer and drive in a nail. Aristotle was too much a realist to allow for

telekinesis. Secondly, although Aristotle does use the term *nous dunamei* (in *De Anima* III. 4), this is not the same as the passive intellect. It is misleading to use 'receptive' and 'potential' as though they were synonymous. Finally, the storing of images as memory is not a function of the passive intellect. Both Aquinas and Aristotle agree that memory pertains to the sensitive part of the soul.

In the discussion of the Prologue to *Legend of Good Women*, we are told that 'the critical intellect ... must give way to the receptive intellect, the passive aspect of the mind' (170). Again, this conveys a false impression. Nowhere does Aristotle suggest that the two capacities of the intellect are in competition, that the individual is swayed now by one, now by another, or that the active intellect can defer to the passive. Deliberately holding the active intellect in abeyance or placing it in some kind of temporary suspension is not an option.

I suspect that lurking behind this misunderstanding is a confusion between the idea of the passive intellect and passivity of the will. In his discussion of the *Book of the Duchess*, St John suggests that while the Black Knight 'emphasizes the passive dimension of his soul he is denying its active capacity – the agent intellect or rational faculty' (52). There is a dualism implicit in that formulation that is alien to Aristotle's hylomorphism. More strikingly, though, to emphasize one thing and deny another are acts of discrimination or judgement, cognitive acts, in which the active intellect is necessarily involved. In terms of Aristotelian psychology, it is impossible to do what the Black Knight is here described as doing, just as it is impossible to set aside the critical intellect, as is proposed in the *LGW* discussion.

Regrettably, in addition to these problems with the book's thesis, our confidence is shaken by some mechanical errors. Thus, we find 'mates' for mate's (11), 'Clanvow' and 'Nevill' (13), 'trys' for 'tries' (24), 'born' for 'borne' (32), 'divers' for 'diverse' (39), 'goddesses' for 'goddess's' (63), 'Curtesysie' for 'Curtesye' (137), 'and' for 'an' (177), 'Wisper' for 'Whisper' (209, 211, 215), 'clopen' for 'clothen' (214), and dittography in the quotation on 40 among other things; we find 'one another' and 'outer reality' hyphenated, we have the construction 'comprises of' (18), and we find throughout a fondness for incorrectly placing a comma between a subject and its verb. Finally, there is often an inexactness in expression that forces the reader to demur: to say that Chaucer translated the *Romance* needs some qualification; to describe the *Consolation* as 'theologically-informed' rather misses the point that Dame Philosophy mostly avoids theological argument; to describe a situation in Capellanus as 'the actual theoretical situation' is a contradiction in terms; the name Lucifer doesn't mean

‘bright one’; *The Cloud of Unknowing* can only loosely be called a ‘devotional’ text, and even more loosely described as ‘a self-reflexive narrative’.

It is a pity that this book is marred by these errors; it is an even greater pity that the presentation of Aristotle’s thought is inaccurate, and inaccurate in a way that undermines the integrity of the thesis. It is a pity because the blurred edges and imprecise terminology have denied readers what might have been a fascinating study of Chaucer’s epistemological exploration.

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Stoyle, Mark, *West Britons: Cornish Identities and the Early Modern British State*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2002; hardback; pp. xv, 262; 10 b/w illustrations, 8 maps; RRP £40.00; ISBN 0859896870.

With a few towering exceptions such as A.L. Rowse’s *Tudor Cornwall*, Cornwall’s past has been relatively short on academic research, perhaps because of its history as a county without a university. Stoyle’s book is a significant contribution to altering this situation. His research is presented with characteristic clarity and elegance. He argues that early modern Cornwall should be viewed within a British rather than English perspective. Indeed, the Cornish viewed themselves as ‘British originals’ not ‘English provincials’ (p. 6). As the articles of the Prayer Book rebels of 1549 stated: ‘we the Cornyshe men...utterly refuse thys newe Englysh’. The remnants of the Cornish language and particular independence of the Cornishman lingers on into recent times.

The book is a collection of essays. Five of them were previously published in the second half of the 1990s but the others are new. The unifying theme establishes a sense of ‘Cornish ethnic identity’ and attempts to explain why the Cornish were so royalist in the Civil War and the outstanding success of the Cornish army. Much discussion also considers whether the Cornish could be viewed as innately rebellious. The result provides us with a new scholarly perspective on the otherwise well-worn territory of the 1640s. The material is presented with panache and Stoyle’s depth of learning is lightly worn.

There is the added bonus of appendices of reprinted original documents. These illustrate the main themes of the book and have potential scope as a teaching tool. The structure as a series of linked essays has some flaws for there is some repetition of facts in different chapters. More than once hurling is

mentioned as a Cornish sport but we learn little more about it. Perhaps as a result of the essay format there is no bibliography. The book contains extensive discussion of Cornish early modern literary characters. This reviewer's own favourite section is Chapter 7, where Stoye looks at the Cornish patriot, William Scawen. But here we have indications that Stoye is lapsing into nostalgia. For example, 'Behind Scawen's scholarly cadences, it seems fair to conclude, one may still catch the voice of a vanished people whispering to us across the centuries' seems tinged with romanticism.

Stoye has charted with assurance the political landscape of early modern Cornwall but the social and economic elements are more lacking. As an exploration of nationalism, this is a traditional treatment of identities and we learn more about battles than culture. My earlier reference to *Cornishman* was deliberate because one would search hard in this book to find any indication of what the identity of the Cornish woman might be. I was left wondering how Cornish identity was played out at the level of the parish. While Stoye's previous book *Loyalty and Locality* explored the implications of the distinct cultures of parishes in Devon, seemingly just over the border we are able to talk about a regional identity encompassing the whole of Cornwall. There is no doubt that Devon cannot be considered to lie within the 'Celtic fringe' as Cornwall does, but this reader would have been more satisfied with a more detailed treatment of these important differences. It seems surprising that an area within Cornwall like the Lizard peninsula would not constitute a region in itself. As things stand the two books offer contradictory views of where the wellsprings of political culture might actually lie. Hopefully this is something that the author will tackle in future work.

Those who enjoyed *Loyalty and Locality* and Stoye's other works, such as *From Deliverance to Destruction: Rebellion and Civil War in an English City*, will undoubtedly like this book. Historians coming to the subject from a social history perspective may be a little more frustrated because there is little in the way of path-breaking social analysis here. We might speculate at this point that Stoye's real interest is in understanding the background to loyalty. It is worth remarking, therefore, on his own loyalty to University of Exeter Press who have published all his books to date and the beautiful presentation of this book suggest that this particular faith is not misplaced.

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Sullivan, Karen, *The Interrogation of Joan of Arc* (Medieval Cultures 20), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999; pp. xxv, 204; RRP US\$42.95 (cloth), US\$16.95 (paper); ISBN 0816632677 (cloth), 0816632685 (paper).

Karen Sullivan's study begins with the promising premise that the surviving documents of the trial of Joan of Arc require closer textual scrutiny, and aims to assess their value as historical documents through investigating their construction as texts. Although these aims are partially achieved, this is in some respects a frustrating book, containing certain inconsistencies of argument which threaten to obscure its many good points.

The Introduction offers an important new perspective on the trial records. It outlines the aims of medieval inquisitorial technique – that is, to extract 'the truth' (or what the inquisitors needed to hear), through interrogation and torture if necessary, and to record the truths uncovered in a document which makes strong claims to accuracy and authority. Sullivan summarises the process by which the surviving texts (two copies of the minutes and three official Latin transcripts) were composed, noting Bernard Gui's recommendation that inquisitorial scribes transcribe 'only those words that concern the substance of the matter and seem best to express the truth' (p. xvi). The composition of the record, then, requires discrimination, selection and arrangement on the part of the scribes.

Rather than an in-depth discussion of this process of composition, Sullivan's seven concise chapters focus on the inquisitors and their modes of thought. She argues that in questioning Joan the interrogators adopted particular perspectives at different moments (shifting roles from scholastics, to inquisitors, to confessors), and that the broader intellectual contexts and discursive traditions associated with the three categories shaped the questions asked and attempts to press Joan to answer in a particular way. This offers a valuable contextualisation of the interrogation. What it does not do is demonstrate that Joan's answers as presented were controlled by the scribes. In many instances her responses do not express the kind of 'truth' the inquisitors were looking for. Indeed, Sullivan's focus in the first four chapters is the frequent mutual incomprehension between interrogator and interrogated.

She illustrates this with great insight and economy in her discussion of the 'fairy tree'. Joan and her village neighbours were able to accommodate their fascination with this tree into their patterns of Christian belief without any sense

of fundamental contradiction. The interrogators, on the other hand, trained by scholasticism to argue that 'What is A cannot be not A' were unable to accept that Joan and her friends could believe simultaneously in legends about the fairy tree and in Christian doctrine. To them, the fairies could only be evil spirits, and Joan risked idolatry in not condemning them. Thus the records reveal a deep cultural clash between the learned questioners and the unlettered woman on trial, and subsequent chapters examine similar clashes over perceptions of visionary experience, over justification for cross-dressing, and over what counted as a 'sign' from God. Through these readings Sullivan demonstrates a capacity for careful reading and offers useful insights into the trial, but does not convince the reader that the texts 'constitute not a representation but a production of the truth of Joan of Arc' (p. xxiv). For these readings to work, Sullivan is required to take the records at face-value, and thus the work is littered with such phrases as 'she really believed', 'the clerics thus recognised', 'they presupposed', 'the clerics took for granted', 'Joan appears to have imagined', 'as the clerics saw it', and so on.

Far from demonstrating complete inquisitorial control over the production of the record, this revelation of a cultural gulf between Joan and her examiners indicates the limitations of the process. Sullivan offers a half-hearted acknowledgement of this, offering the explanation that 'The interrogation itself, even prior to its transcription, represented a collaboration between the respondent and her interrogators' (p. xvii). I find this glib and misleading, especially as the bulk of Sullivan's study reveals not 'collaboration' but struggle and conflict between the parties (and this point is partially acknowledged, p. xxiv). It would be more interesting, from the point of view of attempting to understand the text's construction, to explore how and why the clerical scribes recorded elements of Joan's testimony which do not fit the 'truth' they aimed to produce. Sullivan could also have explored in much greater detail the manner of the texts' production, assessing them against other records such as of the trial of rehabilitation, and offering much more analysis of the language, audience and purpose of the documents.

Treated as a study of the trial, more than of the records, the book has much to offer. The delineation of the gap between the inquisitors' and Joan's mentalities, the careful demonstration of Joan's gradual adoption of the language of her inquisitors and the slow shattering of her self-confidence, the chilling explication of inquisitorial techniques in bullying, confusing and exhausting the defendant (and their near-exact counterparts in modern US police interrogation tactics) – these are some of the riches Sullivan's reading offers us. It is a shame

that presumably to heighten its appeal the book is misrepresented. The back cover blurb claims that Sullivan ‘challenges the accuracy of the transcript’, but if this were so much of her analysis would evaporate. The book’s lack of an overall conclusion perhaps results from the author’s own sense of confusion about its aims and findings.

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Trigg, Stephanie, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Post-modern* (Medieval Cultures, vol. 30), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001; paper; pp. xxiv, 280; RRP US\$22.95; ISBN 0816638233.

Stephanie Trigg takes Chaucer studies since the fifteenth century as a problem in literary history, analysing the tendency of critics to identify with Chaucer on an almost personal basis and thereby constructing an imaginary fraternity of Chaucer’s readers across time. As an exercise in what French sociologists call the history of taste, Trigg’s erudite and often brilliant study uncovers how seemingly popular literature can be appropriated to processes of cultural exclusion. When Chaucer scholarship thinks it is broadening readerships and making culture available, it is sometimes restricting access to that very culture by defining that access in very special ways. The most apparently appealing and natural illusion of Chaucer’s poetry, that he speaks to us as one of us, turns out to be problematic and even sinister when elevated into critical discourse, mapping Chaucer by lines of gender, class and nation.

The book progresses by means of chapters that are simultaneously thematic and historical in development. In Chapter One, Trigg critiques the surprisingly substantial critical commentary surrounding Chaucer’s short poems, addressed to his friends Scogan and Bukton, noting the tendency of critics to become part of the ‘bachelor party’ audience suggested by Chaucer’s poems. In Chapter Two, she describes the practice of scholars ‘signing’ Chaucer, completing his texts through editorial emendations and reconstructions, as well as engaging in jocular, informal imitations of his language, which nevertheless reveal a desire to be part of the club. In Chapter Three, she treats medieval and early modern attempts to ‘complete’ the incomplete *Canterbury Tales* by adding tales or even inserting oneself into the company of pilgrims. Chapters Four, Five

and Six trace the history of Chaucer reception, emphasizing the development of a certain notion of Englishness intimately tied to the idea of a personal Chaucer, fully articulated in Dryden, but repeated by many readers. Even given the amount of scholarship on nineteenth century medieval studies, Trigg is able to make an original contribution, explaining, for instance, the compromises of Furnivall's publication agendas by a conflict between his broad social mission and the rules of the Chaucer club as they are written in the history she has traced. Chapter Seven, on late twentieth century criticism, demonstrates how profoundly these earlier older traditions still limit Chaucer studies. Teaching Chaucer, and presumably teaching other authors as well, it would seem, remains as much a process of initiation as of education, a situation that threatens the very existence of literary study.

Trigg's purposeful readings of offhand comments by the critics themselves are uncannily perceptive. I am cited, for instance, to illustrate a certain attitude towards Chaucer's audience that developed in the 1980s, to the effect that Chaucer's circle consisted of a small core of readers attuned to avant-garde experimentation. True enough, I was an art snob in the 1980s. And she performs similar readings of many other critics, turning the tables against priestly positions. Trigg identifies Charles Muscatine's presidential address to the Chaucer Society as typical of a certain sense of genial irony typical of Chaucer's intimate readers, poking fun at the seriousness of our own scholarship. Yet one would never know from such an account that Muscatine was also author of the widely read 'Muscatine Report' on American university education in the wake of 1968 and the Free Speech movement at Berkeley, nor that he risked his own career in the earlier loyalty oath controversy at the University of California. But her method works more often than not, and reveals more subjective motivations than an intentionalist analysis might otherwise. After all, her point is that the tradition of personal communion with Chaucer often overpowers more public and political agendas.

The consideration of literary study as an aspect of national policy is more familiar in Britain, with its relatively centralised higher education policies and examination systems, than in the US. Such discussions are carried on in terms of social class and access, as opposed, say, to the rhetoric of identity and values typical of US arguments. Hence, for Trigg, the contrarian introductory handbooks, subverting a genre virtually created by A-level examinations, by David Aers and Stephen Knight have the status of political interventions, a point lost on US readers. Trigg's international impact has been partly due to her ability

to bridge the national traditions of literary study. For US readers, her foregrounding of her subject position, as female and Australian, has created an instant sense of familiarity and an identification with an almost postcolonial critical suspicion. Her ability to engage the politics of British academic life also reminds us that for generations Australian and New Zealand scholars have populated a remarkable number of Oxbridge posts in medieval literature. Trigg is often able to address her various national constituencies simultaneously, but at other times she purposely triangulates them, dramatising the limits of our sense of a shared culture. Trigg's thesis also helps explain two frustrating puzzles she does not directly address. One is why the energies of recent scholarship of Middle English literature have been generated more by Langland studies and by studies of Middle English prose rather than by Chaucer studies. The other is the relative irrelevance of even the most sophisticated Chaucer criticism to scholars of other fields.

I have emphasized the contemporary polemical aspects of this important book, but its many local contributions to scholarship should not go unnoticed. Trigg convincingly overturns our efforts to locate an anxiety of influence among fifteenth-century Chaucerian poets. She brilliantly traces the transformation of Chaucer from 'auctor' to 'author' in the Early Modern period. Her thesis about Chaucerian congeniality informs such disparate topics as the priority of Chaucer's manuscripts, especially the jousts between the champions of Hengwrt and Ellesmere. This book will be required reading for Chaucer scholars and students, but it is also potentially relevant to decision makers in the publishing and education sectors.

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Underhill, Frances A., *For Her Good Estate: the Life of Elizabeth de Burgh* (The New Middle Ages 12), London, Macmillan, 1999; cloth; pp. ix, 221; RRP US\$40; ISBN 0333753259.

Writing histories of individual medieval women is a difficult task, given the usual poor survival of material. When a comprehensive collection of sources does survive, it deserves detailed examination and this is what Frances Underhill has done with her history of Elizabeth de Burgh. The survival of Elizabeth's

account books provides a unique and valuable record from which to explore her life and times. Although these accounts give less information on Elizabeth's personal life and inner piety than would be ideal, they remain valuable for the light they cast on Elizabeth's business and family relationships. The account books are well known to scholars, but the monograph length discussion by Underhill allows for detailed contextualisation of the material and of Elizabeth de Burgh's life.

The book is divided into six chapters, with the first and longest giving a comprehensive chronological narrative of Elizabeth de Burgh's life. The following chapters look at different aspects of her life based primarily on her surviving account books. The first of these thematic chapters is concerned with the management of her estates, the next chapter details her personal relationships with others, including family and friends. Then there are chapters on politics and patronage, piety and a final concluding chapter which draws the many threads back together.

This is a sensible and readable organisation of the material, giving adequate background contextualisation for the detailed evidence from the account books and legal cases. One of the main strengths of this book is the concrete and sustained examination of many legal, financial and administrative aspects of aristocratic women's lives. This allows Underhill to explore many otherwise obscure and difficult legal concepts, particularly about land acquisition, management and alienation, in more depth than is often the case. Other important aspects of women's lives such as jointure, dower, and the complexities of marriage as a king's ward are all analysed in detail as they applied to Elizabeth de Burgh. Underhill also gives a useful reading of the politics of the time, from the end of Edward II's reign, to the accession and then the minority of Edward III. Again this is all from the perspective of the fortunes of Elizabeth de Burgh, giving an individual focus for the well-known political narrative.

This book would be more useful when dipped into than read as a continuous text, as there is considerable repetition between chapters and some of the discussion based on the surviving accounts tends to read more like lists than sustained analysis. Elements of the book's production which might have aided readers would have been a map of the locations of Elizabeth's estates and detailed family trees of Elizabeth's natal family, and the families of all three of her husbands. Without these aids the reader is left to try and navigate through many details with few clues for guidance. The notes provided are pleasingly

detailed but unfortunately not only are they presented as endnotes, but the notes pages lack running headers referring back to the text, meaning that finding and keeping one's place between the notes and the text is frustratingly difficult.

Overall this book gives a detailed and sustained account of Elizabeth de Burgh's life and would be useful as a text for upper level undergraduate and postgraduate students of women's history, economic and legal history because of its detailed explanations and examples of legal, economic and social circumstances.

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Warren, Nancy Bradley, *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England* (The Middle Ages Series), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001; cloth; pp. xii, 276; RRP US\$55.00; ISBN 0812235835.

Medieval English nunneries, until recently neglected, are now attracting attention from medievalists of all scholarly hues. In her contribution to this resurgence of interest, Nancy Bradley Warren argues that late medieval women's religious houses were in every way an integral part of society, 'enmeshed in material, symbolic, textual, political, and spiritual economies'. Consequently she uses varied source-materials, many of them unfamiliar, in the first part of the book, 'Monastic Identities in Theory and Practice'. Her analysis of liturgical texts shows the different ways in which Benedictine, Franciscan and Brigittine profession ceremonies present the nun as bride of Christ. Her examination of regulatory texts argues that the various Middle English translations made for nuns of the *Rule* of St Benedict (originally written for men in Latin) and the contrast with the Brigittine rule (originally dictated to St Bridget in her vernacular, then translated into Latin, from which it passed into English, but always aimed primarily at women) shaped nuns' identities. Accounts and legal documents illustrate the relative financial independence of Brigittine and Franciscan nuns in particular and the extent of their business dealings (sometimes abrasive) with the local community, while even conventual seals help present the nunneries' self-fashionings of maternal authority.

In the second part, 'Beyond the Convent Wall: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval Culture', however, the book's focus becomes less tight. This

section is more concerned with nuns as image or metaphor – or, as Warren puts it, the ‘symbolic capital available from female monasticism and holy women’. Although she rightly stresses the ‘permeability’ of convent walls, one has to point out that to slide from nuns to ‘holy women’ is not really playing by the rules. If nuns had a particular identity (as Part 1 illustrates) this cannot be silently transferred to other women, however holy. But this elision enables Warren to consider at length Margery Kempe, who had ‘many profitable interactions with women religious’, particularly Brigittines and Franciscans, and was much influenced by the former and their foundress, and, more briefly, three noblewomen who had links with Syon.

This ‘symbolic capital’ was open to exploitation by men, too, in various ways, and Warren reads the devotional treatise *Book to a Mother* in this light. She also has a suggestive and original chapter on the political uses made of ‘holy women’, both alive and dead, by powerful men. But once again one has to demur that the York recluse Emma Rawghton and Bridget of Sweden, let alone Richard II’s queen, Anne of Bohemia, or St Anne herself, are not nuns.

A further shift occurs in the next chapter, on ‘holy women and the literary economy’. This discusses Lydgate’s *Life of Our Lady* and Bokenham’s *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, both texts that ‘mobilize female saints in connection with political concerns’. So Warren’s attention has now shifted from ‘holy women’ to ‘female saints’ (the Virgin Mary in particular), with the nuns coming a poor third. Lydgate’s poem may well be a neglected text, but this book does not seem to be the obvious place to rectify that. Bokenham’s less neglected poems have female patrons and dedicatees as well as subjects, but none of them are nuns.

Finally, and most surprisingly, we conclude with none other than Joan of Arc, one of ‘the flip-sides of the symbolic coin of female spirituality’. She had defied the authority of the Church on earth and of her family by refusing to marry, and of societal norms by wearing men’s clothing. Warren links her unsettling effects to those of Margery Kempe, who also came into the power of John, Duke of Bedford. Our attention then shifts to William Alnwick, bishop of Norwich and hammer of the Lollards, and the visitation of the Benedictine nunnery of Redlingfield, whose prioress was accused of ‘virtually every sort of troubling behavior in which women religious could engage’: disobedience, unchastity, maladministration, not keeping proper financial accounts, and heresy. (She resigned.)

But only a literalist, or a canon lawyer, could really object to Warren’s having written two books in one. Her resort to ‘holy women’ in general rather

than to nuns as such in the second half of her book is understandable. For the sad fact is that, even if late-medieval women religious were ‘empowered’ spiritually and economically, there is little or nothing to show for it in the cultural record. Except for the elusive Juliana Berners, all the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century women writers whose names we know – Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Eleanor Hull, Lady Margaret Beaufort – were laywomen.

Why did these quasi-religious women achieve so much more than the genuine article? As far as present knowledge goes, the later-medieval nuns of Barking, in spite of being well read and well fed, produced no saints, visionaries, writers or translators that we know of. The Brigittine nuns, to whom so many material and spiritual resources were devoted at the time, and who exercise such a fascination over current scholarship, similarly passed into history not with a bang but a whimper. Perhaps more efforts should be devoted to recovering the achievements of women such as Sibilla de Felton of Barking and less to contemplating their etiolated after-lives as ‘symbolic capital’. This book’s end-notes, stuffed as they are with fascinating details, would be a good place to start.

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Whitehouse, Helen, *Ancient Mosaics and Wallpaintings* (The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo, Series A: Antiquities and Architecture, Part I), London/Turnhout, Harvey Miller Publishers, 2001; cloth; pp. 447; 99 b/w illustrations, 156 colour plates; RRP EUR 250.00; ISBN 1872501575.

Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588-1657) commissioned seventeenth-century artists to provide him with copies of Antiquities (ancient, medieval and Renaissance works of art and architecture) and representations from Natural History (flora, fauna, stones, minerals and curiosities). He collected approximately 7,000 images in what is known as his *Museo Cartaceo*, or Paper Museum. Most of the depictions are now in the Royal Library, Windsor, where they have been re-mounted and rearranged. The remainder are either in other collections, or have been lost.

This book by Helen Whitehouse is the third volume of a Catalogue Raisonné of all the known images from dal Pozzo’s Paper Museum. In all there are to be ten volumes on his c. 4,200 copies of Antiquities and Architecture

(Series A) edited by Amanda Claridge, and nine volumes on his 2,700 depictions of Natural History (Series B) edited by David Freedberg. The Catalogue will make available the known works in the Paper Museum. Amanda Claridge and John Osborne have already published two volumes in Series A, on copies of early Christian and medieval antiquities in Rome. The volume under review is also in Series A. It concentrates on images of ancient Roman mosaics and murals, including some very significant works, such as the Nile Mosaic at Palestrina, the Barberini Landscape and the Aldobrandini Wedding. Francis Haskill (since deceased), Jennifer Montagu and Henrietta McBurney planned this important and ambitious project. Haskill and McBurney outline the history of the Paper Museum and the overall plan of the two Series in the General Introduction. There follow three Tables, and an introduction to Series A by Claridge.

Helen Whitehouse discusses 132 items from the Paper Museum. These include copies of the following ancient Roman mosaics: the Nile Mosaic at Palestrina; two mosaics now in S. Maria in Trastevere, one of a harbour, the other of aquatic birds; another harbour landscape; the Rape of Europa; Apollo in a *tempietto*; a Marine Thiasus with nereids; mosaics in the collection of Cardinal Camillo Massimi, including three fragments of a Nilotic landscape, two emblemata of victorious charioteers, and images of Neptune and Somnus; and a mosaic of sea creatures from Bevagna (Catalogue numbers 1-26, 36-47 and 132). Included among the mosaics is the *opus sectile* decoration of the fourth-century basilica of Junius Bassus, which was later transformed into the church of S. Andrea Cata Barbara (Catalogue numbers 27-35). The ancient Roman paintings are those discovered in the grounds of the Barberini palace, including the so-called 'Barberini Landscape' and images of religious rites; a panel with Bacchic motifs; the 'Aldobrandini Wedding'; a painted vault and walls excavated in the gardens of the monastery of S. Gregorio Magno, Rome; a ceiling panel from the Golden House of Nero; the 'Barberini Roma'; images from an excavation on the Esquiline Hill, including a famous harbour landscape, a scene of Mithras slaying the bull, and the so-called 'Adonis' paintings; a picture of a boar hunt with Meleager; and the murals from the second-century Tomb of the Nasonii, which was discovered in 1674 (Catalogue numbers 48-59, 63-128 and 130-131). There is also an image of Diana of Ephesus (Catalogue number 60), like that painted by Giovanni da Udine in the Vatican Logge; both depictions may be based on a representation on a vault unearthed near S. Gregorio Magno. Two drawings of ancient Roman stuccowork have

Egyptianising figures (Catalogue numbers 61 and 62). Finally, there is a brightly coloured image of a scene from an ancient Roman terracotta plaque, of a matron, bride and groom, which may have been prepared for a seventeenth-century mythological painting (Catalogue number 129). At the end of the volume Jo Taylor discusses watermark types; there are two Concordances of image numbers, three Appendices of documentary references, a comprehensive Bibliography and two Indices.

This is a detailed and thorough work of scholarship, providing a readable and up-to-date assessment of each item, with a colour plate of almost every dal Pozzo copy. Whitehouse discusses the depictions in relation to the ancient works of art, where they survive, and compares them with other copies made in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Frequently illustrations of the ancient works and other drawings or prints are given. Whitehouse shows that often, where dal Pozzo's images differ significantly from other seventeenth-century copies, those in the Paper Museum are the earlier and more convincing versions.

In the case of the Nile mosaic at Palestrina and the decoration of the Tomb of the Nasonii, the author's commentary is outstanding for its clarity and detail in outlining the discovery and subsequent history of the ancient works of art and their relation to the dal Pozzo drawings. The discussion of dal Pozzo's view of a wall in the basilica of Junius Bassus is much more complex and confusing, though this reflects the nature of the evidence.

This book will be of great interest to people concerned with ancient Roman art, seventeenth-century antiquarians and the history of archaeology. The work is very valuable for its methodical format, its convincing and detailed text, its scholarly apparatus, and the beautiful illustration of each dal Pozzo image, accompanied by adequate comparative visual material.

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Short Notices

Cheney, C.R. 249 ed., *A Handbook of Dates: for Students of British History*, new ed., revised by Michael Jones (Royal Historical Society guides and handbooks no. 4), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; cloth; pp. xvii, 247; RRP AUS\$115.00; ISBN 0521770955.

Since its original publication in 1945, C.R. Cheney's *Handbook of Dates* has become an essential reference work for British historians, complementing the *Handbook of British Chronology* compiled by F.M. Powicke in 1939. The latter work has been revised twice, but this is the first revision of Cheney's book. The new edition was coordinated by Michael Jones, and a number of distinguished historians have contributed revisions and new material in their areas of expertise, among them Christopher Brooke (dating of episcopal *acta*), David Dumville and Simon Keynes (rulers of England), Diana Greenway (bibliography), Elizabeth Hallam Smith (law terms) and Ronald Hutton (the Protestant calendar).

The purpose and arrangement of the *Handbook* remain essentially the same as in the original edition. It is intended 'to provide a compact and convenient means of verifying dates' and for dating 'records which a student of English history will commonly encounter' (pp. ix-x). After an initial survey of the different methods of reckoning time – calendars, eras, Easter, divisions of the year and of the day – most of the text is given over to a series of tables and calendars. There are tables giving the rulers of England (from the fifth century) and their regnal years, the Popes, and saints' days and festivals (in alphabetical and chronological orders). The table of law terms from 1066 to 1830 is accompanied by a discussion of dating systems used in legal and parliamentary business. The single largest section of the book is the series of calendars arranged according to all the possible dates of Easter, giving the days of the week for every date in every year between 400 and 2100. There are also tables showing Easter days for each year in both Old Style and New Style, as well as information about the dates when the Gregorian Calendar was adopted in the different countries and regions of Europe. The French Revolutionary calendar is also included.

Among the major changes for this new edition are the dates and names of the early Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian kings, full tables of law terms, and

additional material relating to the Gregorian Calendar. Elsewhere, the layout has been improved and various corrections and additions have been made. As a result, this new edition will be an even more essential tool for historians than the original, particularly for medieval and Early Modern research. Despite the existence of some of this material in electronic form, the *Handbook* is still the most convenient and comprehensive collection of this kind of information.

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Daybell, James, ed., *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, Houndsmill, Palgrave, 2001; cloth; pp. xiv, 213; RRP £47.50; ISBN 0333945794.

James Daybell has brought together an impressive range of essays on women's letter writing at various social levels. Inevitably, there is a tendency to examine the large collections of letters from elite women and in the cases where just one or two letters survive their usefulness is limited. Roger Dalrymple considers the letters of the Paston women, Alison Truelove looks at the Stonors, and Jacqueline Eales comments on Lady Brilliana Harley. In some chapters, historians draw new riches from archives that they have worked on for some years. For example, Alison Wall unearths some strident letters from the Thynne family and Vivienne Larminie finds a new angle on the Newdigates with the letters of Anne Newdigate. Jennifer Ward, James Daybell, Rosemary O'Day, and Anne Laurence offer broader surveys but each of their individual essays deals with a different time period, thus giving the volume a good sense of coherence. Daybell's introduction and own essay are particularly insightful. I found the other three essays fascinating. Sara Jane Steen's dissection of illness in Lady Arabella Stuart's letters gives a perceptive view by applying twenty-first century knowledge of medicine to Stuart's writings. Clare Walker astutely considers the communications of nuns. Susan Whyman considers the particular category of single women's writing from the extensive archive of the Verney women.

The sum of the essays is greater than the parts. Taken as a whole, the essays convincingly argue that women were active letter writers throughout this time period, and suggest that historians who argue that women's worlds only opened out through their letters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

overstate their case. This book is also a highly successful interdisciplinary exercise. It will be necessary reading for medievalists and Early Modern historians as well as literature experts. Most significantly, it will be key reading for anyone who does extensive research on letters. The reader is left with no doubt about the rewarding and multi-faceted nature of correspondence as a source for writing about the past.

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Hadfield, Andrew, *The English Renaissance: 1500-1620*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2001; paper; pp. xxiii, 310; RRP US66.95 (cloth), US29.95 (paper); ISBN 0631220232 (cloth), 0631220240 (paper).

This is a useful textbook which I would happily recommend to my students. It contains a wealth of accurate information, presented clearly and without overt hobbyhorses.

Three incisive chapters develop a culturally pointed ‘History of the English Renaissance’, charting political and religious developments, the roots of colonialism in the period, and the notion of ‘British Isles’. Then short biographies are given of some 40 writers, not neglecting women such as Elizabeth Cary, Mary Sidney Herbert, Aemilia Lanyer, and Isabella Whitney. Where, though, is Rachel Speight and Margaret Cavendish, for example, who might have edged out John Bale and Alexander Barclay? They may lie just outside Hadfield’s terminal date, 1620, but this date may seem too early to incorporate what we think of as ‘the Renaissance’. There is a kind of egalitarianism in giving everybody two or three pages, though Hadfield clearly thinks some are in need of ampler space in order to find the critical attention they deserve – Skelton, for example.

Sensible analyses of about 20 ‘Key Texts’ follow, and there is a refreshing eclecticism about a list that includes *A Mirror for Magistrates* alongside *Utopia*, *The Tragedy of Miriam* beside *The Tempest*. The Shakespeare inclusions may seem arbitrary to some and they exclude, for example, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but Hadfield probably assumes these are not in need of positive discrimination.

‘Topics’ – like Humanism, education, rhetoric, printing conventions, women and gender, and the stage – come next, followed by a chapter on ‘Current Issues in the Criticism of Renaissance Literature’, which is critical but respectful of many approaches. It illustrates the ‘issues’ by reference to differing readings of specific poems, a way of focusing equally on contexts and texts. However, while the theoretical content is tactfully presented, the chapter is too brief to reflect the field of contemporary thinking as a whole.

In the current climate of teaching, contexts are emphasised as never before, but Hadfield, while providing some of these, also allows writers and their works to emerge as the *raison d’être* for study of the period in literature departments.

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Kéry, Lotte, *Canonical Collections of the Early Middle Ages (ca. 400-1140): a Bibliographical Guide to the Manuscripts and Literature* (History of Medieval Canon Law), Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 1999; cloth; pp. xxxv, 311; RRP US\$34.95; ISBN 0813209188.

Canon law is not a subject that inspires much excitement among medievalists. The discipline tends to evoke images of crusty lawyers, beavering away at vast volumes of ecclesiastical legislation. As a subject of academic study, medieval canon law tends to be the reserve of a relatively small group of specialists, interested in what justification some Pope or bishop had for asserting his own authority. While most medievalists may be familiar with the name of Gratian, few have actually had occasion to read the *Decretum*, let alone to dip into the vast ocean of canon law collections compiled between the fifth century and Gratian’s own day. The term ‘canon law’ is itself misleading, in being the product of an age that separated out theology from law as distinct disciplines. In fact, a ‘canonical compilation’ tended to include teaching and decisions covering a vast range of topics, from classic issues of Christian belief, to the thorny debates over property and political authority. In the absence of any definitive guide to ecclesiastical theory or practice, countless monks and clerics endeavoured to compile what they saw as authoritative guides to settle numerous problematic issues with which they were confronted.

This bibliographical guide, compiled by Lotte Kéry, provides a definitive bibliographical guide to the vast range of canon law collections compiled between the early fifth century and the time of Gratian. Some of these, such as the *Collectio Hibernensis* of the eighth century, the *Decretales* of Pseudo-Isidore from the mid ninth century, or the great collections of Burchard of Worms and of Ivo of Chartres from the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, exist in large numbers of manuscripts. Kéry's guide provides a detailed list of manuscripts, editions and bibliography to all of these works, as well as to many others known only to specialists.

Any scholar who comes across a manuscript containing some elements of a canonical collection has here an invaluable reference tool to help identify the work in question. A wealth of meticulous research has gone into this guide, relating to the identification of a vast range of texts, as well as to the dating and provenance of countless manuscripts. This is an indispensable tool for any scholar working with manuscripts that relate to canon law, as well as for any historian of the early medieval period who is concerned with the effort of medieval churchmen to impose rational order on the vast body of ecclesiastical precedent formulated over earlier centuries.

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Lumsden, Douglas W., *And Then the End Will Come: Early Latin Christian Interpretations of the Opening of the Seven Seals*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2001; cloth; pp.xii, 112; RRP US\$40.00; ISBN 041592961X.

This book is concerned with the ways in which Latin Christian authors from the fourth to the ninth centuries discussed a passage in the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation) which describes the opening of a sequence of seven seals by the Lamb. After examining commentaries written in late antiquity by Victorinus, Tyconius and Jerome, individual chapters consider the thinking of Primasius, Bede, Ambrosius Autpertus, Beatus of Liébana and Haimo of Auxerre on the opening of the seals. A brief epilogue attempts to relate these ideas to the monasticism of the tenth century. In all cases, the material is drawn from commentaries specifically on the Apocalypse, rather than references to it in works on other subjects. The text was generally seen as referring to the role of the church in history, rather than being prophetic of end times. The different emphases among

these authors, especially the subtle ways in which they intruded idiosyncratic elements into what the author properly sees as a single exegetical tradition, are intriguing. In general, there was a move away from literal understanding.

When the book turns away from summarizing the material in the texts, odd understandings emerge. Are the efforts of Pope Gregory I in England and Boniface on the Continent appropriately described as simply attempts to extend the Roman liturgy? In what sense was Ambrosius Autpertus a ‘Carolingian mystic’? Even conceding the latter term, it seems bizarre to see someone writing in the south of Italy between 758 and 767 as ‘reflecting the optimism of the Carolingian religious spirit.’ It is false to see Charlemagne absorbing Arian Lombards.

Ultimately, while this book constitutes a scholarly and thoughtful contribution to its topic, it does not make a major statement. The author is properly reluctant to make connections between the emphases of Beatus, for example, and the Islamic occupation of much of Spain. But what we are left with are summaries of the discussions, usually brief, in the works of a series of generally marginal authors (Augustine is mentioned just three times, Ambrose and Gregory not at all), of a passage in a text which was itself seen as marginal within the biblical canon. Doubtless it is good to have it, but there is an air of the secondary about this project.

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