
This work covers Western Christendom between c.1100 and c.1550: it follows on Roger Stalley’s *Early Medieval Architecture*. It is therefore a book on the Gothic style from the beginnings of the Gothic programme at St Denis, Paris, in 1137, to the Christianisation of Muslim Spain and the subsequent Dissolution of the monasteries in England c. 1540. This is very broad work indeed, but the author is undaunted by that, and both her references and the excellent illustrations are impressive indeed. Her opening comment that ‘this is a brief overview of an enormous subject’ neatly sums up her own achievement.

Bristling with knowledge and reference this book does its absolute best to cram a quart into a pint pot. We are whisked from Venice’s Ca’ d’Oro to Prague, Scandinavia, Scotland, Wales (Ireland is not labelled on the maps) and down to Spain at a gallop. But there are threads bound together into a raft during this whitewater expedition: the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, the Ca’ d’Oro, the Karlstein palace appear and reappear amidst the foaming torrent. Any attempt to cover this great, innovative, geographically disparate, subject within about 50,000 words must be highly selective, but this book is not disjointed. It is, however, essentially an art-historical text, and the opening discussion assumes a good grasp of architectural and art-historical terminology. There is no glossary. Whether, as this format is no doubt intended, this is an introductory book for students today, I doubt. But for anyone with a broad interest in, and a good grasp of, Gothic architecture it is a winner.

Even in a text of this complexity and range, there will be without doubt missing buildings, building types and people who might have deserved a mention. William of Wykeham (d. 1404) is one such omission, and while the vault of his New College, Oxford, gets a small line drawing his innovative colleges are almost entirely missing, as are university buildings as a whole, although they were such a feature of the late middle ages. With a secular palace on the cover, it might have been hoped to find more of the work on vernacular architecture of recent years brought forward. Advances in dendrochronology, materials and the archaeology of buildings might also have been given more space. Some occasional repeats of information might have allowed other material in; but what would still have had to be jettisoned to meet this reviewer’s personal prejudices?

In the light of such an achievement it may seem churlish to point out errors and confusions, but the maps of Christendom in c.1200 and c. 1450 do have problems. Only a very limited range of places is marked in the earlier of the two (only Rievaulx and Waverley in England); and a curious range of colours is used, against an unexplained wider geographical area in light tan, in the later map. There are also occasional slips of dating, for example Henry III’s accession date is wrongly given in the text, although correct in the timeline. But overall this is an impressive work, by a genuine international scholar who has a deep appreciation of, and love for, the subject she champions.

Tom Beaumont James
King Alfred’s College, Winchester

This is a most remarkable book. It provides a detailed analysis of the main historical determinants (as the author sees them) of the development of the lands of the former Roman empire between c. 400 and c. 800. The main concentration is on the West, but with important attention to the East. The principal concerns are socio-economic and the sustained approach is on *Annales* lines; *l’histoire événementielle* hardly has a walking-on part. Professor Wickham very fairly says of his book that ‘intellectual culture is certainly not part of its remit’ (p. 7); and references to religion, even as a political force, are largely incidental. What we have is a notably widely informed and original treatise, the main (though not the only) focus of which is the progress and determinants of state formation.

The area which receives most attention is that of England. This could be a little surprising because the author judges the fate of Roman Britain to have been almost unique in involving total ‘systems collapse’. But he justifies this concentration convincingly by showing how the nature of the English sources and development are specially appropriate for the exposition and illustration of his principal arguments.

Professor Wickham sees the early collapse of Roman systems in Britain as accompanied by a process of ‘tribalisation’, of authority breaking down to the level of ‘tiny tribes’, ‘dozens of small autonomous units’ (pp. 313, 306). He believes that fairly numerous German invaders could have fitted into this system as one not unfamiliar to them. Society in Britain in the immediate post-Roman centuries is seen as one organised in ‘peasant mode’, one in which social organisation was only to a limited extent hierarchical and was such that rulers and landlords did not take the surplus product of the peasantry in any large-scale or closely organised way. The little units of authority had ‘simple structures’ (pp. 48-49) and their rulers or lords were essentially the leaders of ‘free peoples’ (p. 305) to whom but light tributes were owed.

These ‘tribal’ and significantly egalitarian circumstances changed and developed in the sixth and seventh centuries. From about the last part of the sixth century a more recognisably aristocratic class began to appear and society as a whole became more clearly organised and class-defined. The number of kingdoms reduced to between six and ten. There was a process, as Professor Wickham puts it, of social and political ‘crystallisation’. An increase in royal power was expressed in an intensification of the burden of traditional levies. Integral to this interpretation is a strong emphasis on the extent to which the consolidation of royal power depended on the extension of that of the aristocracy, and on the relation of both to economic developments involving social transformations.
He applies these forceful ideas to areas other than England. Thus he sees an increase in aristocratic power as characteristic of Italy during the period with which he is concerned. The contrast between Irish political development and that of England, he argues, is to be explained largely by Ireland’s having remained more of a ‘peasant mode’ society. Developments parallel to those of England can be seen in Saxony, but taking place at a later date and at an accelerated pace. The arguments on the intimacy, in many lands, of mutually supportive growth between royal and aristocratic power are arrestingy interesting and should command wide debate.

Professor Wickham’s impressively wide knowledge and range of reference take him well beyond western Europe. (His enormous bibliography is in itself a serious contribution to learning.) Thus it is in the Mahgreb that he finds the most serious parallels to British post-Roman ‘tribalisation’. He compares the ‘exchange intensity’ of the Rhine and Seine areas with that of the Nile valley. In short this work is one of serious and detailed learning deployed in a continuously thoughtful way with strong comparative evidence. It represents a permanently useful contribution to many more debates than one.

His leading ideas have indeed often to be seen as valuable contributions to debate rather than as securely established generalisations. One argument is particularly hard to understand and seems to introduce a needless element of self-contradiction. Thus Professor Wickham is categorical that the developments involved in England’s becoming a powerfully centralised state have little or nothing to do with the period with which he is principally concerned. Thus he writes that ‘the English nation state has its real origins in the crisis of the Viking invasions and not in our period at all’ (p. 49). An argument linking the developments which Professor Wickham places into the seventh and eighth centuries with later consolidation would be more convincing. Thus he stresses, cogently, the importance of Offa’s Dyke as proof of royal power, characterising it as ‘the largest human construction in Europe between the Roman road-network and the canal system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ (pp. 48-49). The construction and deployment of such fortresses as those of the Burghal Hidage would seem a crucial element in the responses to ninth-century crisis. Was not this a feat of organisation based on essentially the same systems of assessment which the charter evidence leads one to suppose lay behind Offa’s Dyke?

A key to the power of the late Anglo-Saxon state is indeed the use of hidage assessments for the levy of tax and service, a system which had a very long history. Professor Wickham states his belief that the hidage-based ‘tribute’ which was levied by Ine c. 700 was exceeded by that levied somewhat later by Offa (p. 378). It is not easy to see why he is categorical against major continuity in the bases of power between the earlier Anglo-Saxon period and the latest.
The origins of hidage assessments remain darkly mysterious. Were they ultimately descended from pre-Roman systems retained in the Roman fiscality, or of Roman origin, or introduced by the Anglo-Saxons? Professor Wickham does not consider the matter but would seem unlikely to allow much for the possibility of German origins. He pays virtually no attention to the significant possibility that German invaders may have come from a milieu of political institutions and ideas of considerable sophistication. Concepts such as that of ‘the average German tribe looking for its place in the sun’ (p. 12) are unhelpful.

A key, and exceedingly difficult, source for the ‘tribalisation’ hypothesis is the (so-called) ‘Tribal Hidage’. Here Professor Wickham relies heavily on a simplified version of a paper by Steven Bassett published in 1989. Admirably interesting though this is, it could not, in its context, give a fully adequate account of the sources, literature, or possibilities. The possibilities include a serious one that the puzzling ‘Hidage’ can sustain interpretation almost opposite to that of Professor Wickham. One can see it as evidence for an extensive system of exploitation with possibly distant origins. It is trying, but true if trite, that the sources for post-Roman Britain are so poor that they permit very varied and even opposed interpretations.

This is specially true of the archaeological evidence. Professor Wickham relies greatly on what is termed ‘the archaeological record’ to sustain his important argument that there was significantly less social differentiation in English lands before c. 600 than was to ‘crystallise’ later. This argument depends very much on burial evidence and so has to assume that grave goods are a reliable indication of relative status and that the millions of people whose burial rites may not have included the deposition of goods need not be considered. Settlement archaeology is also pressed into service, but it is exceedingly hard to see how the handful of excavated (usually incompletely excavated) sites can allow even a half-secure basis for generalisation. It is significant that Professor Wickham regards one of the very few extensively excavated sites, West Heslerton, as seeming ‘atypical in many ways’ (p. 503, n. 159). Professor Wickham is scathing about such theories opposed to his own as those of Dr. Dark (e.g. p. 308, n. 9), but hardly weighs the difficulties in his own arguments. It is anything but easy for interpreters of such periods to avoid being carried along by the tide of their own arguments.

The powerful interest of his wide arguments far outweigh their weaknesses. It is much to be regretted that in his economic arguments he pays notably little attention to numismatic evidence (p. 702, n. 16) and gives too much weight to that of ceramics. Too little attention is given to war and predation as economic determinants. So much said he has done more than almost anyone else to illuminate in detail, above all to raise the most serious questions about relations between economic and socio-political development.

He repeatedly raises questions which demand answers even if the evidence tends to remain such that it can hardly do more than provoke debate. His work makes one inquire
whether anything could be done more definitely to define the parameters of the usefulness of archaeological evidence in relation to historical circumstances such as those which concern him. Perhaps there could. A comprehensive and detailed survey of the archaeology of Domesday England might fill the bill. It could be almost uniquely useful in establishing controls relating to how far the nature and extent of archaeological evidence provides safe indications of social and economic reality.

The range and power of Professor Wickham’s book provokes such thoughts. All students of the period must be deeply in his debt.

James Campbell
Oxford
As signalled in Hudson’s introduction, the publication of a new edition of this important documentary source to replace that of Stevenson, dating from the mid-nineteenth century, is long overdue. The earlier manuscript utilised here (BL Cotton MS Claudius C. IX) dates according to Hudson to the 1160’s. The additions from the thirteenth century manuscript used by Stevenson (BL Cotton MS Claudius B. VI) are here relegated to the appendices, while variants are noted in the apparatus. Hudson’s decision to publish the volume covering the post-Conquest material out of chronological sequence, justified here in terms of waiting for the appearance of Susan Kelly’s edition of the Abingdon Anglo-Saxon charters, is understandable. Nevertheless, it is perhaps marginally frustrating for those awaiting the detailed discussion on matters such as composition and style promised for the introduction of volume I to follow. The introduction here, however, offers much of interest in relation to social and monastic history, together with genealogical reconstructions and maps of the monastery’s possessions. It is helpful, too, to have some outline of the principles applied in translating. In particular, Hudson’s stated aim of maintaining a balance between the retention of the original syntax and the avoidance of excessively stilted English (p. viii) is born out, for example, in his rendition of non nisi armatorum septus manu militum alicubi procedebat as ‘Abbot Adelelm went nowhere unless surrounded by a band of armed knights’ (pp. 4-5), while his linguistic integrity is amply demonstrated by the frank discussion of the difficulties surrounding a particularly problematic passage of Latin in the same section (pp. 6-7, n. 12). The text itself offers fascinating insights into the qualities which can be seen as comprising a ‘good’ and ‘not so good’ abbot. Faritus, characterised by Hudson as the ‘hero’ of Book II of the History (p. xlvi), is praised as seculari prudentia cautissimus, ‘very circumspect in worldly prudence’, illustrated in what follows by his acquisition and repossession of lands for the monastery. Ingulf on the other hand is damned with faint praise as ‘a devout man, educated to the highest degree in the knowledge of letters’ (pp. 254-5), and subsequently accused of damaging the monastery by handing the land of Swinley over to the White Monks of Stratford quasi sub specie recti, ‘with a veneer of propriety’ (pp. 290-291). Both slants find further illumination in the introduction (pp. xlix-x; xxii-i). Here again, the standard of presentation is very high, although it is a pity that a typographical error, ‘the bearer of that document, abandonded(sic) - the bearer? the document? - whether he wished it or not’ (p. 107), should coincide with a translation atypically less than crystal clear.

Gill Knight,
Reading
This unattributed collection of seventeen letters, preserved in a single manuscript (Paris, BnF, lat. 13575), dated to between the late twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries, was first drawn to the attention of scholars by Hauréau in 1891. The collection has been available to readers of Latin since its edition and publication by Jean Leclercq in 1953 under the title ‘Les lettres familières d’un moine du Bec’. Hudry’s work represents the first detailed study of an important dossier relating to the history of letter-writing and monastic relations in the latter part of the twelfth century. Hudry’s fluent and attractively readable translation makes these letters readily accessible to a wider audience, while her scholarly commentary is focused and illuminating. Of much greater potential significance, however, as the stimulating introduction by Pascale Bourgain makes abundantly clear, is the thesis of identification propounded throughout the study as a whole. Taking up the attribution of these letters to Alain of Lille, proposed by Glorieux in 1972 but speedily rejected by D’Alverny, Hudry interweaves stylistic analysis with external evidence to reconstruct a network of friendship and enmity with its roots in the opposition of Gilbert Foliot to Becket and his entourage at Canterbury. Hudry’s elaborate and complex argument, encompassing the re-identification of Alain of Lille with Alan of Tewkesbury and casting fascinating sidelights on such major cultural figures as Peter of Blois, Richard of Saint-Victor and Nigel Wireker, would, if accepted, significantly affect our understanding of the cultural history of this period. At the level of detail, too, Hudry offers important adjustments to earlier readings, as when she counters the traditional date (instrumental in the rejection of Alain of Lille’s authorship), attributed to a ‘too hasty reading’ on the part of Hauréau (p. 14), and points out that Leclercq’s identification of Euermou (as place of ‘exile’ from Bec) with a priory in the diocese of Rouen fails to take account of a reference which seemingly locates it in England (pp. 22-23). Hudry’s greatest achievement, however, is the painstaking reconstruction of an epistolary sequence with its changing voices and unfolding of a dramatic narrative. Even if the specific hypothesis fails to win general acceptance, the study amply demonstrates the value of applying a serious treatment to Latin letters through a combination of close reading and integration within a wider social and historical and context.

This volume, intended as the first of two (the second to carry the text to 1420), offers an invaluable new edition of a source crucial to the study of English history in the fourteenth century. The detailed and ample introduction contains much of interest for specialist and non-specialist alike. In this instance, charting the manuscript tradition is more than an academic exercise, as a reference to the ‘rewriting of history’ in the 1390’s makes abundantly clear (p. liii). Carefully and clearly explained in what follows, the term relates to the excision and replacement of a portion of text in the major surviving manuscript (BL MS Royal 13 E. IX). The original is reconstructed here on the basis of BL Cotton MS Otho C. II, which contains the earliest unrevised account, supplemented as necessary by two further manuscripts (MS Bodley 316 and BL Harley MS 3634). The restored portion of text, covering the events of 1376-77, includes the so-called ‘Scandalous Chronicle’, a term bestowed by Maunde Thompson, its first editor, in allusion to its overtly critical representation of John of Gaunt. Tainted in the chronicle with the slur of illegitimacy (pp. 60-61), the latter is colourfully depicted as a scheming villain, vomiting up ‘the venom of serpents’ and discharging the ‘stings of his malice’ (pp. 60-61). The circumstances surrounding the ‘rehabilitation’ of Gaunt as represented by the revisions of the 1390’s are here meticulously documented and discussed, together with the evidence for Walsingham’s personal involvement in the process, as for example the ‘eye-witness’ insertion concerning Sir Thomas Hoo, said in a marginal addition to the Bodley MS to have related the story of his vision at the start of the Good Parliament ‘to me under oath’ (pp. 4-5 and lix-lx). A careful stylistic analysis establishes Walsingham as author of the chronicle from 1376 to at least 1393, with probable involvement in its initial continuation to 1394. The Latin text itself has many delights to offer the non-historian, for example the presentation of Edward III as senex amator, a foolish old man reduced to servitium amoris, the ‘servitude of love’, by his infatuation for Alice Perrers (pp. 46-47; 58-59), in terms which amply bear out the earlier argument for Walsingham’s classical erudition (pp. xxv-xxvi). The English translation reads smoothly and clearly, if occasionally a trifle literally, for example, ‘her face fell’ for concidit vultus eius, used in the text in opposition to frontem meretricis (pp. 48-49) and signalling the collapse of Alice’s brazen impudence on the arrest of her brother. Footnotes, appendices and indices are of a high quality, although the presence of a typographical error on the first page of translation (advantagisic p. 3) is slightly regrettable.

Gill Knight
Reading
In this collection, R. J. Bartlett has brought together a selection of the papers of R. W. Southern, who, as we are told in the introduction, is "widely regarded as one of the greatest medieval historians". This is no idle statement; the quality of Southern’s writing is attested to in this collection, the aim of which is to present a selection of his papers to a wider audience than they would normally be expected to reach.

The book is divided into three sections; the first being the four papers that Southern gave during his tenure as President of the Royal Historical Society from 1968 to 1972, under the title of *Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing*. The first two papers examine the nature of historical writing in the middle ages, from Einhard to Hugh of St. Victor, the third is an exploration of *History as Prophesy* and the final paper examines *The Sense of the Past*. These papers demonstrate to a new generation of medieval historians the insight that Southern had into his subject, and are as relevant today as they were thirty years ago.

The second section of the book consists of the inaugural lecture as Chichele Professor of Modern History in 1961, the Rede Lecture delivered to the University of Cambridge in May 1977; and an unpublished paper delivered, in 1981, to St. John’s College Historical Society, Oxford, completing this trilogy. These papers discuss the foundation of the study of History in English Universities. In these papers Southern provides an insight into the ancestry of the discipline, and discusses the nature of historical research, along with the effects that it has, not only on an understanding of the past, but also the impact this
understanding can have on the researcher in effecting an almost Damascene enlightenment into the subject under scrutiny.

The final part of the collection consists of Southern’s writings on fellow medieval historians. These are: his teachers, Powicke and Galbraith; and his contemporaries, Hunt, Reeves and Smalley. These vignettes shed light on the personalities behind these names, that are common currency to a modern student of history, and in that light are fascinating to read.

Robert Bartlett, according to the introduction, has used the lightest touch in his editorial revision, but I find it hard to believe that so English a scholar as R. W. Southern would have used American spelling, which, though not intrusive, is at times disconcerting. Moreover, if the book is aimed at a new audience, possibly the current student of medieval history, then the price of £45 is likely to prevent them from purchasing it. Having said that, these papers have stood the test of time and deserve to be published in this way.

Carole Black
Reading
This is a book about how nobility came to be defined in both British and French medieval societies. The author discusses the differences between aristocracy and nobility. He also considers how, in both countries, a consciousness of nobility emerged. He elaborates these themes by debating four broad aspects of nobility; noble conduct, noble descent, noble class and noble lordship. These form the four main parts of the book and each part is further divided into three chapters. The twelve chapters are, with one exception, broken down into subsections, each with its own title. This helps with the accessibility of the book, providing useful signposts to the elements and stages of some wide ranging reviews and debates.

Professor Crouch takes the same basic approach in developing each of his four main topics. He reviews what historians have said on the subject and examines any concepts which have influenced the historiography. He draws on primary sources in order to challenge assumptions and to offer his own reflections on the body of scholarship he has assembled. He also points to divergences and similarities in British and French historiographies as well as discussing some of the factors underlying them. The author describes his book as a ‘travelogue in history’ and as a ‘journal of my own exploration of a vast continent of sources’; the reader is grateful for the presence of such an expert guide.

There is insufficient space in this review to give even a flavour of each of the four sections of the book. However an overview of the first chapter, Reconstructing Chivalry, in the section on noble conduct, may serve as an example of the way in
which Professor Crouch has organizes and structures his material, and the cracking pace at which he presents it. He starts by charting the ups and downs of the study of chivalry from the 18th century up to the beginning of the Second World War. Then, reviewing French, American and British scholarship from 1940 onwards (particularly the work of Marc Bloch, Georges Duby, Jean Flori, Sidney Painter, Stephen Jaeger, Maurice Keen and Richard Kaeuper) he opens up an impressive range of issues. These include: chronologies for the development and the transforming effects of chivalry; ideas of medieval chivalry as a neo-classical institution or as a code of honour amongst warriors; the introduction of the concept of ‘courtliness,’ to describe the medieval social code; the secular and religious strands of chivalry and knighthood; the influence of literature in producing courtly behaviour; and the model of the princely court as a school for conduct, taming young and rootless members of a warrior caste. The ideas come thick and fast in this chapter and throughout the book.

Moving to the end of the book, the author has produced a final chapter, *Noble Women: The View from the Stands*, which he has placed in the section on noble power but which does not fit easily with the other two chapters in the section. A case could be made that the contents of this chapter might be more effective if woven throughout the book rather than being dealt with as a separate issue. Another small criticism concerns the quality and selection of the ten plates which, to this reviewer, contributed very little. However, David Crouch has produced a work which should prove to be extremely useful for students of the medieval period, perhaps most particularly for undergraduate students.

Delia Sarson

Reading
The *Life* of the twelfth-century ‘holy woman’, Christina of Markyate, was first published and translated by C. H. Talbot (from a very difficult manuscript) as long ago as 1959. Scholarly interest has grown slowly but surely and in recent decades Christina has taken her place amongst a small group of medieval women whose stories are becoming as well-known as those of their prominent male colleagues. In this process, Christina has become the focus for a range of work. Art historians have for some time been concerned with the striking, and profusely-illuminated, Psalter which seems to have belonged to Christina (although it is usually known as the ‘St Albans Psalter’). Equally, literary historians have been concerned both with the *Life* of St Alexis incorporated into that Psalter and with Christina’s own *Life*. Amongst historians, the new emphasis on women’s history and on the construction and operation of gender has led to increasing interest in a woman who was apparently able to challenge her family, her husband and even her bishop in order to fulfil her strong spirituality and her self-dedication to the religious life. Samuel Fanous and Henrietta Leyser have now done a considerable service to all those who wish to know more about Christina by bringing together fourteen studies which represent the range of approaches opened up by this newer scholarship. It is especially pleasing that the volume is elegantly presented and (thanks especially to Jane Geddes and her work on the St Albans Psalter) luxuriously illustrated, whilst being very reasonably priced.

Henrietta Leyser’s Introduction achieves the difficult balancing act of treating Christina as an historical woman whose biography can to some degree be known, whilst also acknowledging the contribution of more literary and theoretical approaches to the construction of the *Life* as a text. Indeed, in some ways Leyser goes beyond the other studies, since she points briefly to the curious status of Christina’s priory at Markyate and to the important role given to the cult of the Virgin in the *Life*. These are both very interesting issues which would surely repay further study. What does emerge very strongly from this collection is that the *Life* is structured by relationships not only with other Lives but also with more secular genres such as the Romance. Douglas Gray’s outline of ‘Christina of Markyate: the literary background’ is a helpful introduction for history students unfamiliar with this field. It thus provides a way into the more challenging arguments of Samuel Fanous and of Neil Cartlidge. Fanous shows that, despite its surface simplicity, the *Life* works to present Christina as both a ‘virgin martyr’ and an ‘ascetic martyr’. In addition, Cartlidge gives a brief outline of the problems
created by an uncritical acceptance of the Life as a retelling of Christina’s reminiscences, before moving on to examine the text’s use of the literally dramatic motif of the ‘miraculous’ pilgrim. C. Stephen Jaeger is perhaps less cautious in asserting that ‘the writer’s intention was clearly to narrate a series of “love stories”’; but his analysis of love and spirituality demonstrates in still another way the boldness of the text.

Other contributions are focused on the historical context for Christina’s putative career. Stephanie Hollis and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne survey the range of possibilities open to a woman like Christina, who wished to pursue the religious life without the immediate possibility of becoming a nun. Their catalogue of examples is impressively comprehensive and, whilst the paper moves the reader perhaps rather far from Christina herself, this is a very productive introduction to the spiritual and institutional issues as well as to the bibliography on the subject. Equally helpful as an introduction to a poorly-recorded area is E. A. Jones’ study of Christina in relation to ‘the hermits and anchorites of England’, which also gives a ‘List of sites and hermits’. Thomas Head’s paper on ‘The marriages of Christina of Markyate’ gives a brief and straightforward account of the legal issues raised by the idea of marriage to Christ, and of the competing definitions of marriage available in twelfth-century England. It is Rachel Koopmans who opens up the Life’s most emphatic presentation of Christina, namely as a nun at Markyate, in close communication with the great abbey of St Albans. What is especially valuable about this paper is the demonstration that the witness lists in the surviving foundation charters for Markyate, like the obits added into Christina’s Psalter, show that Christina was not, in fact, the exclusive ‘spiritual property’ of St Albans, as suggested by the Life. In discussing this issue Koopmans, like other contributors, refers to the impressive Psalter which St Albans appears to have given to Christina, and in particular to the striking initial for Psalm 105, which shows a woman (presumably Christina herself) addressing Christ, with the accompanying caption ‘Oh Jesus, spare your monks, I pray’. Jane Geddes’ contribution to the volume is a careful and thorough analysis of the Psalter, which looks at its construction, the five sections which make it up, and at its illumination. The fact that the ‘Christina’ initial is a later addition is emphasised; but what is especially fascinating here is the analysis of the points at which images of women occur in the manuscript overall, and the presentation of the book as an embodiment of the multi-layered relationship between Abbot Geoffrey of St Albans (its putative patron) and Christina (its recipient). The unusually generous inclusion of 8 colour reproductions from the Psalter in this volume is to be celebrated; but those who wish to pursue the analysis of the manuscript are referred to the impressive website set up under the direction of Jane Geddes, www.abdn.ac.uk/stalbanspsalter.
This review is already long, and there is no space to give an account of all the papers in this volume; but the book should by welcomed, not only by those interested in Christina herself, but also by all those with an interest in medieval women religious.

Anne Lawrence
Reading
This collection contains thirteen essays by a variety of scholars, not all of which are equally relevant to the title, giving the impression that either the title or the choice of articles should have been different. That said, there are many interesting things in the collection, although perhaps inevitably there is a certain amount of repetition between the different articles. The story of the woman at the siege of Acre, who wanted her body to be used to help fill the moat, occurs at least three times, as does the reference to white feathers being distributed to non-combatants in the First World War.

Perhaps the most stimulating article of all is Peter Frankopan’s spirited defence of Anna Comnena in ‘Perception and Projection of Prejudice: Anna Comnena, the Alexiad and the First Crusade’ (59-76) in which he makes a strong case for treating the Alexiad as a high-quality source and rejecting the interpretation that Anna was a prejudiced and partial woman whose sex alone made her ability to be an accurate historian doubtful. The articles by Yvonne Friedman and Sylvia Schein, ‘Captivity and Ransome: The Experience of Women’ (121-139) and ‘Women in Medieval Colonial Society: The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in the Twelfth Century’ (140-153), also repay careful study as they provide much interesting detail on the society of outremer. Helen Nicholson contributes a typically scholarly study of Templar devotion to a female saint, arguing that this puts them right in the mainstream of Catholic thought, in ‘The Head of Saint Euphemia: Templar Devotion to Female Saints’ (108-129), while Susan Edgington and Natasha Hodgson effectively demonstrate the importance of studying the relevant literary texts in ‘”Sont çou ore les fees que jo voi la venir?” Women in the Chanson d’Antoiche’ (154-162) and ‘The Role of Kerbogha’s Mother in the Gesta Francorum and Selected Chronicles of the First Crusade’ (163-176) respectively. The volume concludes with a fascinating essay, ‘The Crusader’s Departure and Return: A Much Later Perspective’ (177-190) by
Elizabeth Siberry on nineteenth century depictions of the crusaders and their women in art and poetry, illustrating the period’s taste, as much for the macabre as for the chivalry.

The other essays by Sarah Lambert, Matthew Bennnett, Constance Rousseau, Michael Evans, Miriam Rita Tessera and Keren Caspi-Reisfeld all repay study but there are a couple of points to query. Sarah Lambert on pp. 12-13 suggests that Villehardouin regarded Baldwin of Flanders as his hero. The near-unanimous view of critics has been that Villehardouin was very close to Baldwin’s rival Boniface of Montferrat and quite critical of Baldwin. Jean Dufournet has argued convincingly that there was considerable ill-feeling between the Champenois, amongst whose leaders was Villehardouin, and the Flemings which makes it unlikely that Baldwin would be his hero. On p. 99 Keren Caspi-Reisfeld suggests that, when the women used knives instead of swords to cut off the heads of the defeated Turks, it shows that they had the ability to use medieval weapons. Michael Evans on pp. 52-53, however, uses the same episode to argue that it shows the inability of the women to use knightly weapons. Instead they had to resort to the less prestigious civilian weapon, inflicting further shame on the defeated enemy, which is surely the correct interpretation.

The book has a bibliography and an index and is beautifully produced. There is much here for any scholar working on the crusades.

Peter Noble
Reading
This detailed examination of medieval Coventry is published in the Royal Historical Society's *Studies in History New Series* and is based on work submitted by Richard Goddard as his PhD thesis which has been extended by further research. The book's strength lies in the integration of a case study based on detailed archival research into a theoretical framework, in order to explain the processes by which medieval urban communities were formed and developed. Employing the evidence from Coventry, a city in the second tier of the country’s urban hierarchy and with a lay and ecclesiastical lord, Goddard argues that there were two elements within its development. They were the combination of a central and powerful authority who acted as an enabling force, coupled with the entrepreneurial skills of Coventry’s business community. The central authority initiated the process of development by providing a framework within which trade could be conducted with relative ease and offered incentives to attract business. Subsequently it was the activities of the local merchants, burgesses and artisans that made the town prosperous and who were able to sustain the momentum of development. At points within his analysis Goddard can be controversial, especially when he adopts a modern business perspective. For example, when he considers the motivation, attitudes to profit, and investment policies of the landowner Coventry Cathedral Priory, he presents a picture of an entrepreneur and hard-headed business investor in real estate. The more theoretical aspects of the book are balanced by the frequent employment of studies of individuals, such as Henry Baker, who provide the human element in this history. The book explores Coventry’s development from the Domesday survey of 1086, through the expansion of the twelfth century when both lay and monastic lords played a significant role, into the thirteenth century to consider the impact of migration, the occupational structure of the town and the urban land market. This is followed by a survey of fourteenth-century developments in trade, manufacturing, occupation, the land market, and patterns of borrowing both in the city and with its hinterland. Consideration is also given to topographical developments by employing archaeological evidence, and this is illustrated with detailed maps. There is a strong comparative element as Coventry’s significance is measured by drawing on data from similar towns such as York, Leicester, Norwich, Shrewsbury, Oxford and Winchester. In sum, this is a useful addition to our understanding of developments within medieval towns, and Coventry in particular.

Margaret Yates
Reading
Dianne Hall, Women and the church in medieval Ireland, c.1140-1540. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2003. 256pp. 7 Tables, 2 Graphs, 16 Figures. ISBN 1-85186-56-4. £27.50 (hardback)

This book is an exploration of the external expressions of the religious life of women in Ireland from the mid-twelfth century to the dissolution. It may be divided into two parts. Chapters 1 and 2 (‘Lay women’s piety’ and ‘Women’s patronage of religious institutions’) survey the extant sources in order to identify and categorize the devotional practices of lay women in medieval Ireland. Particular attention is paid to the extent and nature of their patronage of six major monastic houses: St Mary’s, Dublin; St Thomas the Martyr, Dublin; St John the Baptist outside the Newgate, Dublin; All Saints, Dublin; the dependent cells of Llanthony Prima and Secunda at Colp and Duleek, Co. Meath; and the priory of Tristernagh, Co. Westmeath. Chapters 3 to 8 then focus on nuns and religious women, with studies of the various boundaries that marked their life, from monastic architecture and enclosure to estates resources, local politics and conflict management.

Among the religious practices of lay women in chapter 1, we predictably find donations and bequests to the Church and pilgrimages; Hall highlights the information yielded by cases of female excommunication, as well as that found in wills or through the choice of burial sites. Marriage within the prohibited degrees of affinity appears to have been a particular problem in the ruling families of medieval Ireland, with evidence suggesting that people went to considerable lengths to ensure the validity of their marriage, if necessary through dispensation. Women’s patronage tends to be expressed through donations of land to both male and female (typically, local) monastic houses, and through personal devotions such as prayer and attendance at mass. The overall proportion of female donors in the donor charters of the six monastic houses of Hall’s sample appears in Table 1, while the categories of women donors (sole alienor, joint alienor, consentor, spiritual beneficiary or witness) are set out in Table 2. Regrettably, Table 1 is unreadable, as what claim to be percentages clearly cannot be so (St John apparently comprising 102% of donor charters with women); however, Table 2 is more informative and the data is duly analysed with reference to comparable figures in the rest of twelfth-century Europe. Figure 1, which charts the numbers of charters with women as sole alienors, shows a steady progression in the thirteenth century peaking in the years 1260-1280, then falling steeply until, by 1320-1340, donations by women are very scarce indeed. Some of
these women appear to have purchased corrodies in the monastic house of their choice, while a significant minority of them supported new ecclesiastical ventures (though women founders of female monastic houses are relatively more unusual in Ireland than in England or France). Marked differences are observed in the patronage of Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Irish women, due to the fact that Gaelic women were not allowed to alienate land whereas English widows could dispose of property. Donations by Gaelic Irish women therefore tend to be gifts of moveable property.

This ‘Gaelic exception’ points to a major difficulty encountered by Hall: the fact that very few records remain for Gaelic Ireland. The title of the book is therefore somewhat deceptive, as the image of women’s piety in medieval Ireland is of necessity going to be a partial one, reflecting religious practices essentially among the English or anglicised Irish. The foundation of nunneries in Ireland, investigated in Chapter 3, follows the pattern of other parts of Europe, with an upsurge in the number of foundations in the mid twelfth century (as illustrated in Figure 2); in 1195, St Mary’s, Clonard, thus had no fewer than 13 nunneries attached to it. The Arrouasian rule appears to have been popular among the Irish religious and their patrons, possibly because of the alignment of the Augustinians with the native Irish reform movement. Another wave of foundations occurs when the first generations of Anglo-Normans make their mark on Irish diocesan and parochial structures; and a final, smaller movement of convent foundation in Gaelic Ireland follows in the fifteenth century under the influence of the mendicant orders. The characteristics of these successive waves, and the key foundations, are considered in some detail, with maps to guide the reader (Figures 3, 4 and 5), providing the backdrop to the specific cases analysed in the following chapters. The buildings and estates of 11 Irish nunneries with surviving ruins are discussed in Chapter 4; the physical size of the nunneries (cloister and church) and their values are charted in Tables 3, 5 and 6. A comparison between the surviving Thomond and Connaught monastic ruins (Table 4) allows Hall to relate the dimensions of nunneries to those of male monastic houses; the ground plans and surviving ruins of Killone abbey and of St Catherine d’Conyl are analysed in depth, with due attention paid to decorative features and artwork. The motifs on the seals of nunneries are also discussed.

The estates donated to nunneries meant that religious women had to be feudal landowners. Management issues, explored in Chapter 5, were therefore unavoidable, and these problems have left archival evidence. Hall considers the importance of
family support for the nuns (and especially the convent superior), the necessity of defending the convent’s property (particularly in cases of disputed ownership of lands), and the question of managing income. The legal and political problems that could arise from the election of a new abbess and the regular threat of physical violence in march areas (and in some ‘safe’ areas too) are considered in the light of specific examples. The tension between the convent’s relationship with the secular world and the rule of monastic enclosure is explored in Chapter 6. Hall notes a number of reports of nuns, and indeed abbesses, who bore children; the situation appears to have been further complicated by resistance to clerical celibacy in Gaelic Ireland.

The important roles of nuns as providers of prayer for the spiritual health of the deceased, of education for the young and of welfare services for travellers meant that the cloister, to quote the title of one chapter, was ‘permeable’. Hall notes that in Ireland as elsewhere, the tendency went in the direction of a stricter enclosure of nuns. However, mentions of female hermits or anchoresses, and evidence of women who seem to have lived under private vows without belonging to a convent (including a certain Isabella Palmer, described as a ‘virgin’ at her death in 1347, despite the fact that she had been married more than once) are also covered. Chapter 7 is a case study of a well-connected abbess, Elicia Butler, who drove her nuns into open rebellion in 1531 after squandering the convent’s assets, flouting canon law, promiscuous behaviour (with a relative) and physical violence against the other nuns. She was eventually demoted, but her expensive tomb in St Canice’s cathedral (Figure 16) still depicts her as a religious woman.

The last chapter briefly considers the fate of Irish convents at the dissolution, with special attention paid to the pensions awarded the nuns (Table 7 sets out the number of pensions granted, the pension of the superior, the pension of the other nuns and the total estate value of 6 nunneries). Finally, two appendices list the convents in medieval Ireland and the names of all the individual women connected with Irish nunneries in the course of Hall’s research: a resource that the student of Irish ecclesiastical history will find invaluable.

François H. M. Le Saux
University of Reading

This book sets out to provide an introduction for sixth formers and first year undergraduates to a period of history for which there is a dearth of suitable material at present. Indeed, it is encouraging to read a work designed to open up the option of medieval history at A level, an antidote to the domination by the Third Reich of exam syllabuses.

The format of the book is clear and accessible. Each of the three sections (1042 – 1066, 1066 – 1154, 1154 – 1217) follows a similar pattern of four chapters, dealing with: The Reigns; Ruling the Kingdom; Kings and the Law; and Kings and the Church. This establishes a clear framework, and enables comparisons to be drawn across the period. The frequent subheadings are a useful guide through what could be a daunting amount of material. In addition the eleven pages of “Debates” provide a focal point for consideration of some of the key issues, and, with their separate bibliographies, allow for further research by students; these would be excellent triggers for classroom discussion. The conclusions set out at the end of each chapter enable students to evaluate the changes and developments covered. Where the wider European context is necessary for understanding developments in England, sufficient detail is given, but Huscroft is wisely not over-ambitious in trying to cover too much here; his introduction recognises the limitations of the book, which are entirely in accordance with its purpose and title. He gives equal treatment to each of the separate periods covered, and evaluates both challenges to the rulers of England and the resulting changes and developments in government and the law. He demonstrates the continuity of Anglo-Saxon features in the administration and the innovations developed by successive
monarchs in response to the new circumstances, particularly the responsibility for changing territories in France.

The chronological table at the front will be thoroughly appreciated by students new to this period, as well as general readers; the maps are an excellent inclusion, as is the short note on money values. The bibliography contains a useful survey of accessible texts, including a discussion of the qualities of the more easily available narrative contemporary sources. The index is thorough and generally well cross referenced, although the 'Tax' entry omits items the lay reader might expect to find there, but which fall instead under 'Feudal dues'. Additionally, while specific terms such as 'scutage' and 'thegn' are clearly explained in the text, a glossary would be helpful. This is a small criticism for a book which successfully achieves its aim to make this period accessible to good sixth form students and young undergraduates.

Carol Stone, GCMS
The University of Reading

This is the second volume of Sir Anthony Kenny’s multi-volume history of Western philosophy, still in production. As he says at the outset, the intended audience is ‘at the level of second- or third-year undergraduate study’ (xii). Kenny adds that his purpose is to be ‘both a philosophical historian and a historical philosopher’ (xi), and the result is a pleasing combination of historical and philosophical exposition, with occasional analysis of leading theories.

Kenny has had a long and celebrated career as a philosopher, mainly at Balliol college, Oxford, where he has been both Fellow and Master. He was for seventeen years Pro-Vice Chancellor and retired from academia in 2001, though he has continued his prolific output. His many popular and successful books have included works on Descartes, Wittgenstein, Aquinas, philosophy of religion, and philosophy of mind.

Sir Anthony is on familiar territory with the current volume, since he was earlier in his life a Catholic priest, ordained in 1955 but excommunicated following his marriage in 1966. (He had been laicized in 1963, having already fallen from the Catholic faith, but was not dispensed from celibacy – hence the excommunication.) Kenny now describes himself as an agnostic, but the point of this brief bit of biography is that he received a reasonably thorough education in medieval and Scholastic philosophy, in the days when it was still systematically taught to seminarians.
This training shows itself in the book under review: Kenny wears his learning lightly, but it is clear that he has deep familiarity with the thinkers he expounds, and he generally does so accurately and charitably. The first two chapters give a quick chronological overview, taking the reader from St. Augustine, through late Greek philosophy, neo-Platonism, Muslim and Jewish philosophy, early and late medieval Catholic Scholasticism, ending with Renaissance Platonism and Aristotelianism. The remaining chapters are thematic: Logic and Language; Knowledge; Physics; Metaphysics; Mind and Soul; Ethics; and God.

The book tends to stick to a selection of main thinkers of the medieval period – St. Thomas Aquinas, St Bonaventure, Abelard, Duns Scotus, St. Anselm, St Augustine, William of Ockham. There are also, though, intriguing short discussions of the views of relatively lesser philosophers (though substantial in their own right), such as John Wyclif, Henry of Ghent, and Nicholas of Autrecourt. These serve to remind us why the medieval period is the greatest in the history of philosophy, though I would hardly argue with anyone who put the Greeks first: after all, they invented the subject.

To take a small but revealing example, Kenny mentions an argument of Wyclif’s against nominalism. Nominalism is the view, popular in the later Middle Ages, that there are no real universals: that, say, there is no objective universal property of greenness common to grass, leaves, my green pullover, and all the other green things. Plato and Aristotle were both realists, holding that such universals did exist: for the former they were eternal Forms; for the latter they existed in the green objects themselves, and were abstracted by the mind that apprehended the objects and
recognized them as sharing a common feature. Augustine followed Plato, Aquinas supported Aristotle. The nominalists, on the other hand, disbelieved in the existence of what for them were mysterious entities – abstract objects – preferring the view that only particular objects existed. Their supposedly common features were explained – depending on the view of the nominalist concerned – by the mere brute resemblance of certain objects (all the green things resemble each other, and there’s an end to it), or by the fact that we correctly apply linguistic terms such as ‘…is green’ only to green things, or by the mind’s applying the concept of greenness – a purely mental item – to particular objects.

Against the resemblance view Wyclif objected, to put it in modern terms, that resemblance has to be in a certain respect. Nothing purely linguistic or mental could explain resemblance: as Kenny phrases it, according to Wyclif resemblance has to be ‘something on the side of the things signified, not something belonging purely to the signs’ (152). The interesting point is not so much that Wyclif’s argument is a good one – which it is – but that the great Bertrand Russell made exactly the same point over five hundred years later, and without citing Wyclif. There is nothing new under the sun.

Kenny’s book shows how much gold there is still to be mined from the medieval mind. I wonder whether contemporary philosophers have even touched the surface, though work in recent decades by dedicated scholars such as Eleonore Stump, Norman Kretzmann, Jorge Gracia, Gyula Klima, Robert Adams, and many others (including Sir Anthony himself) has served to revitalize work on medieval philosophy and to bring its riches to the centre of the profession. The Islamic medieval
philosophers, to whom Kenny rightly devotes substantial attention, are also making a comeback: the most notable illustration is the rehabilitation of the Kalam cosmological argument for the existence of God, due to the brilliant, tireless, and almost single-handed work of William Lane Craig.

The Kalam scholars were one of the two main schools of medieval Arab scholasticism. (‘Kalam’ means ‘discourse’ in Arabic; see Kenny, p.35, for a brief account.) The argument, defended most prominently by al-Kindi (c.801-873) and al-Ghazali (1058-1111), and in the West by St Bonaventure (St Thomas demurring), is that the universe must have a cause of the beginning of its existence, since it did begin to exist and anything that begins to exist must have a cause of its beginning. Needless to say the details are complex, but Craig has enlisted modern cosmology and philosophy of mathematics, among other things, in defence of this ancient argument. Kenny’s account is necessarily brief (288-90), but the argument is a typical example of the kind of thinking that can inspire contemporary philosophers and give them a career’s worth of valuable work.

It goes without saying that it is St Thomas Aquinas who occupies centre stage for Kenny, St Augustine coming not far behind. Aquinas, within a century of his death (1274), and ever since, has rightly been regarded as the ne plus ultra of medieval philosophy. Unrivalled for profundity, system, and sheer word count (in the millions), the philosopher known as the Angelic Doctor deserves the substantial number of pages Kenny devotes to him. There are solid overviews of his metaphysics, epistemology, distinction between faith and reason, views on thought and language, and on our knowledge of God. Having written many years ago, however, a book
debunking Aquinas’s celebrated Five Ways to prove the existence of God, it is no surprise to see Kenny giving these only a cursory and ill-served treatment (302-4). The arguments, in the view of a number of serious philosophers, still have plenty going for them and cannot be shrugged off in the way they are by Kenny.

Kenny does not intend for his history of philosophy to supplant Fr Frederick Copleston’s magisterial, multi-volume study, nor does it do so. Though Copleston’s is now quite antiquated as far as the history of twentieth-century philosophy is concerned, for medieval thought it is an essential reference. For a more in-depth account, you still cannot go past Maurice de Wulf’s three-volume *History of Medieval Philosophy* which, unlike Copleston, is sadly only available on the second-hand market, with volume three only available in French. De Wulf shows the reader the panoply of medieval thought – the rival schools, the conflicts, the twists and turns of fascinating debates that sometimes ended only when an exasperated Pope finally enjoined silence on the warring parties. He tells us of even the most minor thinkers and their sometimes idiosyncratic contributions, and provides a substantial bibliography (albeit confined to material appearing in or before the 1930s and 1940s, when his history was published). Supplemented by the recent multi-author volumes of Routledge and Cambridge University Press, Copleston and de Wulf will give you most of what you need to know for an overview of medieval philosophy. Meanwhile, Anthony Kenny’s lively, typically lucid and elegantly written book will serve as an ideal introduction for beginning students of the period, and as an enjoyable and entertaining read for anyone wanting a concise survey of the main currents of medieval thought.
David Oderberg

Reading

*Authority and the Female Body* is not for the faint-hearted, but rather for a specialised audience of academics researching medieval mysticism and mystical tradition. However, it also has an impressive bibliography which would be useful to all medievalists. The volume is an extremely well researched new study into the differences between society’s view of women and their own perceptions and experiences. Liz McAvoy analyses in exceptional detail the mystical writings of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich, aiming to show the importance of the female, and how the female body can be reconstructed in their image. The book begins with a lengthy Introduction, starting with a general overview of the effects of the Fall of Eve on the perception of the female throughout the centuries, and an introduction to the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘authority’. McAvoy also includes a debate on the theory of ‘the body’, which again is extremely detailed and well-referenced, and takes the reader magisterially through the historiography of the last few decades concerning the role of women in history.

The book is divided into three parts, each divided into two chapters which deal with the two women separately. It would be wise for a reader to be well-versed in the texts of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich, for McAvoy jumps straight into a thorough analysis of them. McAvoy’s thematic approach concentrates upon the conventional concepts of motherhood, sexuality (‘the holy whore’), and the desire of knowledge (‘the wise woman’), these being central to any study of medieval women in history. McAvoy identifies how the two mystics used discourse and imagery, and a creation of a feminised language, to demonstrate the potential for the female body to become a hermeneutic for female writers, especially mystics. Both sought to achieve authority and create a space in which they can be heard, particularly in the context of their religious and mystical experiences.

The chapters are written and argued with great insight and thought, contain a lot of information, and are difficult to summarise. But, as a taster of the book’s contents, we see that in Chapter 1 McAvoy argues that Margery managed to exploit her life and text in order to gain empowerment and ease herself into the role of holy woman and spiritual mother. By contrast, it is suggested in Chapter 2 that Julian’s text of her mystical experiences was ‘born’ from her suffering, resulting in her eventual portrayal of God as Divine Mother. Chapter 3 is an analysis of a ‘discourse of prostitution’ in Margery’s text which suggests that, from being a ‘common harlot’, Margery is able to become a ‘redeemed Mary Magdalene’; thus an apostless, wise woman and prophet. This theme is picked up and enlarged upon in Chapter 5 (‘Margery Kempe: Wisdom, Authority and the Female Utterance’) as well as in the remaining two chapters on Julian
of Norwich. Through this structure, McAvoy portrays the extent of the gap between society’s views and the mystics’ own experiences as both women and writers.

The book is even better on re-reading and I would very much recommend that time is taken to absorb all that McAvoy has to say about these two women and their texts.

Anna Campbell
Reading

This is a reflective account of this elusive monarch by an expert historian after many decades of studying Stephen’s reign. The elusive status of the monarch is revealed in the illustrations, which inevitably, due to the lack of contemporary representations, rely on coins and post-medieval depictions of the monarch. The book opens with a cracking chapter on historiography – with due weight given to Reading’s greatest medievalist, Sir Frank Stenton, for his reinterpretation of J. H. Round’s work relating to the exploration of the role of the barons. Stenton’s ‘feudal conservatism’ is preferred to Round’s ‘feudal aggression’ (31). Indeed the whole book is imbued with a deep understanding of how the writing of English medieval history has developed through characters such as Stubbs, who blamed Stephen’s perceived weakness for allowing free rein to the barons’ ‘true nature’ of defiance and lawlessness.

As a confident emeritus professor Matthew not only brings to bear his depth of knowledge but also breezily crosses swords with his predecessors such as Stubbs, his pupil Round, and others. Free from the necessity to pay court to his fellow-historians, Matthew comments on the social standing and often limited experience of historians in ‘public affairs’, drawing neat comparisons with the narrow outlook of the medieval chroniclers upon whose works these unsophisticated historians rely for their views of Stephen. Thus Matthew proceeds to rebuild Stephen’s reputation starting from the base of a neat explication of Henry I’s reign and making the point that, like other kings without heirs, Stephen’s reputation was at the mercy of his successors, in his case Henry II and the Angevins. He argues in the maligned Stephen’s favour that he was not incompetent, nor was he indolent, drawing at each stage on a demonstration of the bias of contemporary writers – of whom, as he points out, there were a surprisingly large number.

In his final chapter, ‘Envoi’, Matthew opens up new topics for discussion: the role of monasteries (Stephen’s Faversham, now completely lost); and of bleak medieval castles, the focus of ‘Romantic horror’. His discussion of coinage introduces another unresolved aspect of the material culture of the reign, namely the significance of a range of patrons of coinage. The book is overall nicely produced, although (like the Hambledon website reference to this title) it has a few typographic errors (Pierpoint for Pierpont; Balwin for Baldwin in the book, for example), and a disappointing range of illustrations. After an enjoyable and instructive text, the reader closes the book reflecting, as Matthew has done, that there needs to be more debate on this until now universally denigrated period of English history, and that Stephen’s merciful character has been his downfall at the hands of historians building personal reputations on hero-kings. There should certainly be much more work on the surviving material culture of this ‘lost’ period of English archaeology and art-history, only hinted at here. We should also now address the issue Matthew raises with his final words. As he says, ‘The problems created by minorities bent on subverting lawful governments still elude solution’; or in other words ‘how do you manage insurgents?’

Tom Beaumont James
King Alfred’s College, Winchester
This collection presents selected papers from two conferences on women’s history, held in 1999 and 2001. It is also the newest volume in Four Courts’ series on women’s history, following on from *The Fragility of her sex?* (1996) and *Women in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe* (2000). However, where the earlier volumes dealt with medieval and early-modern women respectively, this new collection ranges across both periods. Exemplary in this regard is the very first paper, John Flood’s study of depictions of Eve. This starts from the neglected area of Eve as represented in biblical Latin epics of the fifth and sixth centuries, and demonstrates that these contributed in important ways to the works of the humanists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

After this, we are given a group of papers dealing with the issues of women’s access to property and power in the medieval period. Claire de Trafford looks at the problem of the marriage-portion or dowry, and at the proposition that both bride and groom enjoyed defined, if very unequal, rights over it. No really new arguments are made here, but the shifts in the significance of dowry for both women and their younger children are valuably outlined; and it is useful to have a reminder of the economic importance of dowry coupled with a clear outline of legal changes from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Brendan Smith looks at the rather different issue of the role of women in the establishment of Anglo-Norman territories in Ireland. He demonstrates that this ranged from the literal and military to the more predictable role of victim. Perhaps more surprisingly, he also shows that many of the early conquerors in Ireland took their female relatives with them on campaign, and that the ‘poor rate of survival of the early conquerors’ (p.10) opened up unexpectedly varied careers for these women. A helpful contribution to the history of dower is made by Gillian Kenny in ‘The power of dower’. Here she analyses the importance of Anglo-Norman law and custom relating to dower rights for women in thirteenth-century Ireland. In Ireland as elsewhere dower emerges both as a very important protection for widows and a source of conflict, frequently serious, between and within the complex families created by serial marriages. Once again, the apparent independence seen to be given by dower, and commented upon by medieval writers, is problematised. Thus, whilst a good picture is given of the circumstances unique to medieval Ireland, it is also made clear that the overall picture is a familiar one.

Perhaps the most conceptually ambitious contribution to the collection is Kimberley Lo Prete’s analysis of the career of Adela of Blois, and the reactions it evoked from male contemporaries. Lo Prete demonstrates the scope of action available to a woman who was the daughter and mother of kings (even if her husband was merely a count); as well as the extent of the ‘dossier’ relating to a woman who clearly made a considerable mark on her world. This gives rise to reflections on the issues of gender and power and to the argument that medieval Europe had no problems in accepting ‘lordly women’ without having to resort to treating them as honorary men. The point that such an
approach is not only anachronistic but also removes these important individuals from the history of women is well taken. However, the ancillary arguments that: medieval sexual and physiological discourses allowed ‘a place for “manly” women; that the issue is related to similar conceptual difficulties over the nature of love; and that the ‘fundamentally “private” powers of medieval lords’ made it possible for medieval noblewomen to exercise power without transgressing gender norms, pull in too many different directions. If ‘lordly women’ were acceptable, can there be a need for the ‘manly woman’ in this context? And, even if the realm of the private is part of the issue, the reader is left asking the famous question; ‘What has love got to do with it?’

This question is raised also by Catherine Lawless’ study of ‘Women on the margins; the “beloved” and the “mistress” in renaissance Florence’. As Lawless points out, one of the main problems here is that little is known of these women, apart from the fact of their maternity if a child was acknowledged by a lover. What emerges most strongly is the issue of class as overdetermining concepts of both love and familial relationships. Lawless suggests that these women, by their maternal capacity to create ‘parallel families or structures’ were also subversive. Yet her catalogue of examples suggests that their ultimate fates were very clearly determined by their class origins, and the degree of access to familial power, if any, they had. Thus their actual capacity to subvert existing structures of power depended rather upon others than upon themselves. Nevertheless, that women’s reproductive capacity could indeed be seen as a threat is strongly suggested (and illustrated) by Samantha Riches’ concluding, well-illustrated, study; “‘Hyr wombe insaciate’: the iconography of the feminised monster” which brings us back to the field of representation, where we began.

Anne Lawrence
Reading

Goddard Henry Orpen’s history of Ireland from the first arrival of Anglo-Norman colonists in the late 1160s to the murder of Earl William de Burgh of Ulster in 1333 generated political controversy when first published by the Clarendon Press, 1911–20. A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and a barrister in England in his early career, Orpen affronted many fellow Irishmen with his contrast between Ireland’s ‘progress, vigour and comparative order’ under Anglo-Norman rule, and ‘retrogression, stagnation, and comparative anarchy’ under ‘the recrudescence of Celtic tribalism’ in the two centuries after 1333 (p. 559). Seán Duffy, in the stimulating appreciation reprinted from *Irish Historical Studies*, 32 (2000) to introduce this reissue, points out that such statements, so inflammatory in the tense context of early twentieth-century Ireland, now reward readers with ‘insights into the Weltanschauung of [their] author and his class’. More crucially for medievalists, he also claims that *Ireland under the Normans* ‘has not been surpassed and…cannot be superseded because it is the fons et origo of the professional historiography of Anglo-Norman Ireland’ (p. xxiii).

This is no exaggeration. Orpen’s successors still find this book a source of interpretative inspiration, not least in its pithy assessments of English kings. For instance, Orpen’s striking picture of Henry II casting ‘hungry eyes towards Ireland’ long before the fateful ‘parley’ with King Dermot of Leinster in 1167 (pp. 24, 26), was strenuously attacked by W.L. Warren in 1969 and 1973, then reassessed and largely re-rejected on different grounds by Marie Therese Flanagan in the 1980s. Yet in Duffy’s eyes it remains the more convincing interpretation (p. xx), while Anne Duggan gave Orpen’s ocular imagery a further gleam in 2003. But *Ireland under the*
Normans is not just about high politics, nor is its historiographical importance confined to its resonance as an interpretative landmark. It charts, in unmatched scope and detail, the course and extent of Anglo-Norman colonization in Ireland. It identifies not only leading incomers, but also sub-tenants, and the campaigns, alliances, royal grants, religious patronage, castle-building, development of manors and towns, by which they and their heirs established themselves across two-thirds of the island, before critical reverses in the early fourteenth century. It also considers their impact on the native, Gaelic Irish. Several of the thirty-nine chapters have appended genealogies, documents, and discussions of problems of evidence and chronology; all are the product of rigorous scholarship. And while Orpen’s extensive printed sources have remained accessible for subsequent research, he used others no longer available: original material lost in the tragic shelling of the Four Courts (home of the then Public Record Office of Ireland) in 1922; archaeological sites that have since been damaged or destroyed.

With his great work long out of print and newly out of copyright, its reissue is timely and welcome, particularly as the text, originally spread over four volumes, is here reset in more compact, convenient, single-volume format. This entails new pagination and renumbered footnotes, with the volume and page numbers of the original edition given in running heads and shoulder notes. Unfortunately, the positioning of the shoulder notes on inside, rather than outside, margins makes them difficult to check quickly. This is a significant disadvantage because the index, an integration of the two-part original, has not otherwise been updated, so refers only to the old pagination. While the publisher’s decision not to copy-edit Orpen’s text seems reasonable, more care should have been taken in reproducing his maps and tables. On the first two maps, there are numerous missing or misread letters in place and lineage names; certain tables show similar problems with digits in dates (including that cited in the de
Burgh pedigree for the crucial death of Earl William), also changes of word order. Most of the errors will amuse rather than mislead, but readers surprised to find a Donough Murtough Finn being slain by the Four Masters (p. 211) may need to go back to the original edition (or the Annals) to disentangle the muddle. However, the reissue’s eight and a half pages of bibliographical references for Orpen’s footnote abbreviations provide considerable compensation. So does its handsome presentation, combining headbands in ‘Norman’ red and gold with a jacket featuring the National Gallery of Ireland’s Marriage of Princess Aoife with Strongbow by Daniel Maclise. In discussing the historical context and significance of this event, Orpen took issue with Maclise’s ‘imaginative’ conception of it (pp. 72–3). For the ‘Celtic revivalist ideology’ of Maclise, we can consult John Turpin’s article in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Given the importance of Ireland under the Normans, and the wider interest its reissue should arouse, it is surely time for the ODNB online to cover G.H. Orpen too.

Elizabeth Matthew

Reading

This is a welcome second edition of a valuable text-book. It is notoriously difficult to produce a good elementary introduction to the Middle Ages: there are so many threads to follow and to relate to one another. Professor Rosenwein has faced these difficulties well in producing a clear, interesting and adequately comprehensive text.

The most striking feature of the book is that it is superbly illustrated, largely in colour and with helpful comments. Maps and tables are numerous, very well produced and not swamped by excessive detail.

The major flaw – which one hopes will be set right in many later editions – is the inadequacy of the bibliographies. This text-book is, as is made clear in its introduction, distinctly aimed at the beginners. The bibliographical apparatus is ill adjusted to them. It is too much weighted in favour of recent monographs and pays too little attention to what would be within the compass and meet the needs of students at this early stage. For example Michael McCormick’s *Origins of the European Economy* is included. It is over a thousand pages long. Is such a work really likely to be useful to beginners? Would it not be better to give Pirenne’s *Mohammed and Charlemagne* and try to get them arguing? Why put in S. D. Goitein’s six volumes on the geniza documents from Cairo and include not one work by Marc Bloch? It would be easy to expand this criticism.

Otherwise this work is seriously good, and its illustrations alone should be enough to convert many to medieval interests.

Baerbel Brodt
Oxford and Roehampton

This book will be required reading for all those who seek to understand sexual behaviour and attitudes in the Middle Ages, as Professor Karras shows that the traditional views of medieval sexual practices have all too often attempted to impose nineteenth or twentieth century interpretations on them. She stresses that for medieval men the active role in sex was all important. Thus a passive homosexual who allowed himself to be penetrated by other men would be despised but his active partner(s) who did the penetrating would escape the scorn of their contemporaries. Homosexuality is a very difficult subject to analyse in a medieval context, as there is relatively little evidence; but Karras is able to refer to sources from Florence, Venice and Avignon which offer some interesting material. The principal reason why sodomy and homosexual love were condemned was that they drew men away from the prime purpose of sexual activity, namely reproduction. Karras stresses how reluctant clerical authorities were to sanction any form of sexual activity which was not designed to encourage the bearing of children; the fiercest church fathers had difficulty in accepting even this.

After an introduction which explains what the author plans to do, the chapters cover marriage, chastity, women outside marriage and men outside marriage. A brief afterword draws the material together. There is an extensive and useful study of further reading and an index. The book requires extremely careful reading as the author ranges across Western Europe and, occasionally, Byzantium, drawing on Christian, Jewish and Muslim sources. The scholarly standard is high, although there are a couple of slips when French sources are discussed. In Marie de France there are women who are the sexual aggressors (p.122), notably in *Lanval*, and in the *fabliaux* David is not the husband of the girl with whom he sleeps (p.18). There are also a couple of typos on p. 87 where a plural subject is followed by “was” and on p. 132 where the text reads “whom he felt were”. That apart, the book is carefully produced and is a valuable contribution to the study of medieval life and of the position of women.

Peter Noble
Reading
This collection of 25 articles is the third book of a series on medieval Welsh law. After a first volume on the status of women in the Welsh lawbooks, then another on issues of suretyship, the present volume is concerned with the so-called ‘Laws of the Court’. As with the previous volumes, this is a mix of essays and edited texts, which in conjunction provide the reader with a comprehensive and detailed study of all the key aspects of the corpus in question.

The Laws of the Court are mainly a list of the privileges of the officers of the royal household, with a number of manuscripts including sections on the local officers of what was still presented as a mobile household rather than a fixed court. These tractates, meant for the use of legal practitioners, are important sources for medieval European history, as this is the oldest and fullest description of the structure of a European royal court, including the pay and allowances of its officers. The manuscripts preserving these texts have not yet been fully edited, so the question of textual transmission is given particular attention. In an introductory excursus to the collection, Dafydd Jenkins investigates the relation of the different versions of the lawbooks, an important issue as we have two distinct versions (known as ‘Iorwerth’ and ‘Cyfnerth’) that cannot be connected in a neat stemma form and need to be distinguished in any analysis of the material. Essays exploring specific aspects of the Laws of the Court come first; the Welsh manuscripts are then described by Daniel Hughes (essay no. 20), introducing a final section where four texts quoted and studied in the essays but difficult of access are edited and translated (‘The Laws of the Court from Cyfnerth’, by Morfydd E. Owen; and ‘The Laws of the Court from Latin B’, ‘Nósa Ua Maine: ‘The Customs of the Ui Mhaine”, and Canu i Swddogion Llys y
Brenin, all by Paul Russell). The extent to which Nósa Ua Maine is to be considered as historically accurate is also discussed by Máire Ni Mhaonaigh.

The opening cluster of essays focuses on the court officers mentioned in the sources. Dafydd Jenkins (‘Prolegomena to the Welsh Laws of the Court’) analyses the lists of officers in the different versions of the tractates; the implications of the privileges granted to specific people are then considered, taking account of historic events known to have occurred around the time individual texts were copied. Robin Chapman Stacey discusses the role and place at court in the tractates of the king, queen and edling (i.e., the official heir), while A.D. Carr, Huw Pryce and J.B. Smith consider the king’s three ‘indispensables’, i.e., respectively, his military retinue (teulu) and its commander, the penteulu; the household priest; and the court judge. Medical practitioners and medicine at the Welsh court are presented by Morfudd E. Owen, who helpfully translates the texts used in an appendix. The distinction between the household poet (bardd teulu) and the ‘chief poet’ (pencerdd) is explored by Dafydd Jenkins, while the terminology used to designate court officers (‘Swydd, Swyddog, Swyddwr: Office, Officer and Official’) is analysed by Paul Russell.

The larger picture is considered in essays that make use of texts other than the Laws of the Court: Peredur I. Lynch (‘Court Poetry, Power and Politics’) addresses the issue of possible evidence of a rise of Welsh national identity in the thirteenth century, with reference to the poetry of the Gogynfeirdd; T.M. Charles-Edwards and Nerys Ann Jones analyse the politically-charged Breintiau Gwŷr Powys (‘The Liberties of the Men of Powys’), by the celebrated twelfth-century poet Cynddelw, also providing an edition and translation of the poem; Morfydd E. Owen selects anecdotes (which she helpfully edits and translates) suggestive of royal propaganda; D.B. Walters compares the Welsh tractates between themselves and with non-Welsh
texts, in particular the writings of Hincmar of Reims; and Glanville R. J. Jones (‘Llys and Maerdref’) considers the layout of the medieval Welsh court complex on three archaeological sites.

The cultural life of the Welsh court is the subject of four further essays: on hunting (Dafydd Jenkins, ‘Hawk and Hound: Hunting in the Laws of the Court’), food, drink and clothing (T. M. Charles-Edwards), the cultural associations of public display (Robin Chapman Stacey, ‘Clothes Talk from Medieval Wales’), and the vexed question of courtliness, with the analysis by Manon Phillips (‘Defod a Moes y Llys’) of the vocabulary used in Welsh texts to render the concept of ‘courtly’ or ‘courtliness’. The fact that the texts do not need to rely on French loan-words is seen as indicating a thriving native court culture that had assimilated and verbalised ‘courtly’ values independently from Anglo-Norman influence.

Read in sequence, these essays build up a coherent picture worthy of any monograph on the subject; there is no doubt that this volume will be an important, and indeed unavoidable, reference for anyone working on medieval courts, Welsh or otherwise. A full, clear glossary of the terms (Welsh, but also Latin) used in the volume is included, making it accessible to a wide readership, while the index is remarkable user-friendly: knowledge of the Welsh language is not in any way required to derive full benefit of the outstanding scholarship between these covers. A must for all self-respecting University libraries.

Françoise Le Saux

University of Reading
This volume contains an introduction, thirteen essays (roughly one per mythological poem in the Poetic Edda), and a general bibliography. Four of the essays have been written specially for the collection and two others appear in English for the first time. There are some revisions and updatings to the reprinted essays, but John McKinnell’s article on Völundarkviða appears in sadly truncated form, with a summary of its first part substituted for the text originally published in the journal Saga-Book.

Space does not permit consideration of each essay in this collection, but no part of the book is without value. What is less certain is quite what all the parts add up to. The book’s title, for example, invites the question whether this is a collection of essays on the Poetic Edda (despite the fact it includes essays on eddic poems not in the Codex Regius manuscript and does not discuss heroic poems that are in that manuscript) or on ‘Old Norse Mythology’ (a considerably wider field). Some of the essays provide ‘literary critical’ readings of eddic poems, others treat the poems primarily as mythological sources. So, for example, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen’s article examines all surviving sources for the story of Þórr’s fishing expedition, not only the eddic poem Hymiskviða, whereas Paul Acker’s discussion of dwarf-lore in Alvíssmál deliberately sets out to read the poem in its own terms rather than in the light of other sources. Philip N. Anderson analyses Lokasenna’s artful repetition and the significance of its use of different metrical forms, whereas Jerold C. Frakes offers a reading of the character of Loki in Norse myth generally, seeing him in relation to Georges Dumézil’s tripartite mythological system as an ‘anti-functional’ god.
Each essay is preceded by an editorial account of the subject matter of the poem(s) under discussion and a brief overview of some of the previous scholarship. All quotations in languages other than English are translated, and the general bibliography covers editions, translations, reference works and book-length studies in English. All these features suggest a readership of beginning students, as do the contents of some of the essays: Margaret Clunies Ross’s specially written ‘Reading þrymskviða’, for example, is well designed to help students meeting the poem for the first time. Other essays, however, are of a much more specialised nature: this is particularly true of Joseph Harris’s short article (first published in 1975 but supplemented with a new afterword) focusing on a single crux in Skírnismál.

By beginning with an account of how little information survives about Anglo-Saxon paganism Paul Acker’s introduction risks giving the unfortunate impression that the primary value of Old Norse material might be to make good this deficiency. Despite its title, (‘Edda 2000’), the introduction does not provide an overview of the state of eddic studies two years before the publication of the book, but instead offers a very brief description of the Poetic Edda and an account of the theoretical influences on and critical positionings of the essays that follow.

Lars Lönnroth’s essay on the first eight stanzas of Völuspá, translated by Paul Acker for this volume, provides a serviceable introduction to the poem and usefully adumbrates the idea of the ‘double scene’ but its value is compromised by some unacceptably sweeping assertions, especially about Old English poetry, that betray its origin in a book aimed at a popular market. Svava Jakobsdóttir’s article on an episode from Hávamál that inspired her novel Gunnlaðar saga has been translated by Katrina Attwood; it is an interesting but also a highly speculative interpretation and the arguments really needed more space for their development.
The original essays not already mentioned are Carolyne Larrington’s discussion of Vafþrúðnismál and Grímnismál within a framework of ‘cosmic history and geography’, and a detailed account by Judy Quinn of the völur (‘prophetesses’) who appear in eddic poems, in the course of which it becomes clear that they are of considerable importance.

Despite some doubts about the coherence and intended audience of this volume, it is a very worthwhile collection that usefully makes its contents more widely accessible. If it were reprinted as an affordable paperback and provided with a fuller index it would make a handy ‘companion to the Poetic Edda’ for students, but at its current price it is well beyond their means. A comparable volume on the heroic poems in the Poetic Edda would be very welcome.

Carl Phelpstead
Cardiff
This volume has been incontestably the most long-awaited volume in the series ‘Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages’ (previous volumes have included the Arthur of the Welsh, English and Germans; further volumes are in preparation). The reason for this is that, not for the first (or last?) time in European cultural history, it has been the French who were in the literary avant-garde in giving imaginative shape to a whole congeries of semi-historical but in the main fabulous material often known under the generic term of the matièr de Bretagne sequences (which include not only the deeds of King Arthur and his knights as told in romance and [pseudo] chronicle but the stories of the Grail and the Tristan traditions). The French narratives went on to influence the literature of all the major European lands in a way which has not been restricted to such as Malory, Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites but still remains a productive international force. In that regard, the last chapter by Joan Tasker Grimbert and Norris J. Lacy (‘Arthur in Modern French Fiction and Film’, pp. 546-70) is particularly to be welcomed (both in its own terms and also on the pragmatic grounds than undergraduate teaching must now adapt itself to new media if medieval fictional studies are to retain a niche in our curricula). This particular chapter gives prominence not only to the works of well-known directors such as Robert Bresson (Lancelot du Lac) and Eric Rohmer (Perceval le Gallois) but also takes into account the diversified, European context in which all new actualisations of the Arthurian and Tristan legends must now emerge. It is for instance scarcely possible to (re) write the Tristan story now without taking account of the (irresistible) influence of Richard Wagner’s opera Tristan und Isolde, to which the authors make ample reference. The same breadth of scope characterises the chapter by Geoffrey Bromiley and Tony Hunt on ‘The Tristan Legend in Old French verse’ (pp. 112-134) with their references to the German version by Gottfried von Strassburg.

In a decade which has seen a number of ‘Companion Volumes’ appearing on a whole host of medieval themes and authors (for instance on King Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere, Tristan and Isolde, Chrétien de Troyes) there is inevitably some overlap between the material of these various publications, yet within the confines of one
volume it is difficult to imagine any other volume than the one immediately under review being able to perform the same ‘multi-tasking’ function of providing reliable guides for all students (and scholars) studying medieval French (and Occitan) literature in all its manifestations. Nor has the advantage of ‘overview’ been achieved at the expense of analytical depth--Roger Middleton’s initial chapter on manuscripts [pp. 8-92] almost represents a short monograph in itself. A welcome particularity of this volume is its number of co-authored chapters, each collaborator being invariably a world authority on her/his particular segment of the work. I predict for this pivotal volume in an already distinguished series a ‘shelf life’ as long as or even longer than that of Roger Sherman Loomis’s *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (1959), often invoked by previous generations as a ‘bible’ but which, unlike the present, splendidly judicious volume, had sometimes to be read with a certain degree of care.

Neil Thomas
Durham.
During the last quarter century many a medievalist has moonlighted as a Tolkien scholar, and much of the most insightful criticism of J. R. R. Tolkien’s work has been produced by those who have honed their critical and interpretative skills on medieval literature, as he did. In her introduction to this new collection Jane Chance provides a brief overview of Tolkien studies and argues that ‘it is time to reconsider the question of Tolkien’s medievalism’ (p. 4). In particular, she (justifiably) claims that this book gives fuller consideration than hitherto to texts published posthumously under the editorship of Tolkien’s son Christopher in *The Silmarillion* (1976) and *The History of Middle-earth* (12 vols, 1983–96).

The first of the book’s four sections focuses on Tolkien’s medieval scholarship and his relations with other medievalists. Douglas A. Anderson provides a richly documented account of the life and work of E. V. Gordon, a colleague of Tolkien’s at the University of Leeds with whom he edited *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Verlyn Flieger effectively places Tolkien’s famous essay ‘On Fairy-Stories’ in the context of the history of folklore studies. She sees the essay (published in 1947, but delivered as a lecture in 1939) as a direct reply to both the comparative philology of Max Müller and George Dasent and the evolutionary anthropology of Andrew Lang. Andrew Lazo’s account of Tolkien’s friendship with C. S. Lewis adds little that is not already well documented, but brings the material together conveniently for non-specialists. Lazo also draws on an unpublished letter in which Lewis reflects on connections between his and Tolkien’s work, but copyright regulations prevent Lazo quoting the letter directly. This essay is marred by more factual and typographic errors than I noticed in any other contribution: amongst others, these include the mis-spelling of Nevill Coghill’s first name as Neville (p.
confusion of the British with the Royal Academy (p. 44), and a reference to C. S Lewis’s *The Last Battle* which ought to be to *The Magician’s Nephew* (p. 45).

Mary Faraci uses speech-act and discourse analysis theory to read Tolkien’s most influential piece of scholarship, his essay ‘Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics’ (1937). She draws some interesting, though largely coincidental, parallels with the life and work of the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin. The section concludes with a long piece by Christine Chism comparing Tolkien’s use of Germanic myth and legend to its use by the Nazis and analysing Tolkien’s reaction to their appropriation of material he loved.

Part two of the book concentrates on Tolkien’s masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*. A second essay by Flieger compares ‘wild men’ in Tolkien’s work with their medieval predecessors and shows that Tolkien does not simply reproduce the medieval type but always also modernises it. Leslie Donovan’s essay on the ‘valkyrie reflex’ in *The Lord of the Rings* is one of the most illuminating in the collection; in demonstrating how the valkyrie figure informs the characterisation of several of Tolkien’s female characters (especially Galadriel, Shelob, Éowyn and Arwen) Donovan shows that here too the medieval type is adapted and developed rather than simply borrowed. Miranda Wilcox compares ‘exilic imagining’ in *The Lord of the Rings* and the Old English poem *The Seafarer*. Margaret Sinex goes beyond the Old English and Old Norse sources that interest many of the contributors to compare the episode involving the Passing of the Grey Company in *The Lord of the Rings* with the appearance of Armies of the Dead in Latin texts of the twelfth century.

Part three shifts attention to Tolkien’s debts to patristics and Catholic theology. The first two essays of this section both concentrate on *Ainulindalë*, the magnificent Creation myth that begins the posthumous *Silmarillion*. In a
revised version of the only essay in this collection to have been previously published John William Houghton argues that had Tolkien’s Creation narrative been known to a medieval theologian it could have been fitted into a Christian-Neoplatonist worldview. This is of some significance, since Tolkien’s original conceit was that the story would be told by an Anglo-Saxon narrator called Eriol or Ælfwine. In the next essay, Bradford Lee Eden shows that references to music in both *Ainulindalë* and the rest of *The Silmarillion* can be related closely to Boethius’s hierarchical division of music into music of the spheres, of the human voice, and of instruments.

Jonathan Evans’s account of ‘the anthropology of Arda’ is not an easy read and could have been more tightly structured, but is not without value and insight. Michael W. Maher’s contribution on Marian elements in the portrait of Galadriel would sit more easily in a book entitled *Tolkien the Catholic* than it does here, and one feels that Roman Catholicism is being equated a little too easily with ‘the Medieval’: the Marian texts Maher uses are the Litany of Loreto (which became popular only after the Middle Ages: see p. 226) and Alphonsus Liguori’s eighteenth-century commentary on it (the latter admittedly quarried for its quotations from medieval writers).

The book’s final section consists of two fine essays on Tolkien’s *Silmarillion* mythology. Gergely Nagy provides a thoughtful and thought-provoking account of how depth is created and maintained in Tolkien’s various versions of the story of Túrin. By showing how the surviving texts relate to real and imaginary other versions Nagy is able to make a broader point about the nature of ‘myth’, arguing that, rather than being a particular kind of story, it is better understood as a particular kind of relation between texts. The book ends with Richard C. West’s analysis of another story preserved in various versions, and one that is central to both Tolkien’s mythology and his own life: the story of the love between Beren and Lúthien.
None of the essays in this volume is devoid of original insights and the best (among which I would include the contributions of Anderson, Flieger, Donovan, Houghton, Nagy, and West) are very valuable contributions to our understanding of the most popular writer of the last century. By the end of the book one recognises all the more clearly both the magnitude of Tolkien’s achievements in scholarship and fiction, and also the value of reading his work from the perspective of the medievalist.

Carl Phelpstead
Cardiff
Contents of Cold Counsel:
(1) Introduction: “og eru köld kvenna ráð” (Sarah M. Anderson)
(2) “En hon er blandin mjökk”: Women and Insults in Old Norse Literature (Zoe Borovska)
(3) Hildigunn’s Lament (Carol J. Scott)
(4) Women’s Voices in Old Norse Literature: The Case of Trójumanna saga (Randi Eldevik)
(5) Taming the Shrew: The Rise of Patriarchy and the Subordination of the Feminine in Old Norse Literature (Helga Kress)
(6) The Re-emergence of Women’s Voices in Icelandic Literature, 1500-1800 (Shaun F. D. Hughes)
(7) Vikings Westward to Vinland: The Problem of Women (Jenny Jochens)
(8) “Pegi Pú, Pórr!”: Gender, Class, and Discourse in Prymskviða (Jón Karl Helgason)
(9) Fathers, Mothers, and Daughters: “Hver er að ráða?” (Marianne E. Kalinke)
(10) A Good Day’s Work: Laxdæla saga, ch. 49 (Jonna Louis-Jensen)
(11) Women’s Counsel in the Riddarasögur: The Case of Parcevals saga (F. Regina Psaki)
(12) The Woman Who Knows: Female Characters of Eyrbyggja saga (Forrest S. Scott)
(13) Male Bonding, Female Body: The Absenting of Woman in “Bisclaretz ljóð” (Kerry Shea)
(14) Ambiguously Gendered: The Skalds Jórunn, Auðr and Steinunn (Sandra Ballif Straubhaar)
(15) Women Outside: Discourse of Community in Hávamál (Karen Swenson)
(16) Saga World and Nineteenth-Century Iceland: The Case of Women Farmers (Pórunn Sigurðardóttir)

I begin with this list of contents because most scholars will want to buy this book only if most of the individual articles are of interest to them, either because of their subject matter or their author. Although many of its articles will be essential reading for anyone working on women in Old Norse literature, this expensive collection is not a particularly coherent one. Rather it represents a very mixed bag of articles: old and new, excellent and poor, innovative and pedestrian. The editor also seems to have produced it in a hurry (it is not clear what involvement Swenson had in the editing process). The (five-page) introduction quotes the passages in Njáls saga and Gísla saga where the coldness of women’s counsels is invoked (without mentioning that in one manuscript of Gísla, it is actually Póðís and not Bókr who uses the proverb), before briefly outlining the contents of the volume. This outline quickly reveals that the collection is not centred around women’s cold rāð - “their advice, their readings” (xii) - although a few of the articles are. Rather it is centred in a more general way on ‘women’, as Anderson’s concluding sentence makes clear: “each of these fifteen writers shares the conviction that considering the speech of women, and the reading practices of, as well as the readings practiced on, woman as subject can enlarge and enrich Old Norse criticism” (xv).

This breadth is in many ways a strength - it includes various genres of saga and poetry, legal and historical documents, as well as various critical methodologies. However, this breadth of coverage also entails a lack of unity, symbolised by the “note on editorial practice” which seems to abdicate editorial responsibility in favour of allowing this group of international scholars to use different conventions of typography and citation: some using only footnotes, others providing a list of works cited. There is also a generous sprinkling of typographical errors in both Norse and English throughout the book. More seriously, although the acknowledgements indicate that the articles by Clover, Kress, Jochens, Kalinke, Louis-Jensen and Scott are reprinted, there is no way from this volume to ascertain when or where they first appeared. Kress’s article, for instance, appears as far as I can gather using a web-search,
to be a translation of ‘“Ser du dette sverdet, möy?” Om undertrykkelsen av det kvinnelige og oppkomsten av et patriarkat i norrøn litteratur’ (Edda 3 (1992), 203-215). Given the huge advances that have been made in terms of gender and sexuality studies in the last couple of decades, such an acknowledgement seems desirable. Within the collection an old-fashioned study like Scott’s or Jón Karl Helgason’s sits uneasily with the more nuanced and theoretically aware analysis of Kerry Shea. A firmer editorial hand should have been taken with the style of a couple of the contributors, too, particularly Psaki’s article.

Having said all this, one can only be grateful for the generous number of articles included. Moreover, some of these are innovative and important contributions to scholarship, and I am not just thinking of Clover’s justly celebrated article on inciting and lamenting in Old Norse. For me the highlight of the volume was Shea’s article, which uses Sedgwick’s theory of homosocial bonding and Kaplan’s work on the male gaze to structure and motivate an illuminating and suggestive analysis of Bisclaretz Íjóð. Although Shea’s argument will not convince in every detail, it points the way for other Old Norse scholars to use such theories to open up new pathways of analysis in Norse literature. Also stimulating is Kress’s contribution, since, although it provides an over-generalising account of giantesses and strong women in a huge range of Old Norse texts, it throws up material enough to inspire a dozen articles on the Norse construction of gender. Shaun Hughes gives not only an excellent overview of the marginalised women poets between 1500-1800, but also in his notes provides the raw material and references for a fuller history and study of these writers. Jón Karl Helgason’s article on Prymskviða stimulates in a different way, since his argument that the poem is ‘about’ Pórr’s loss and recovery of his masculinity raises more questions than it answers. There is clearly room for a more nuanced explication of how this text constructs gender and sexuality (particularly one that does not conflate ‘woman-like, homosexual, sissified’ as definitions of argr, p. 160 - and this post-Sørensen!). Psaki and Eldevik both compare Norse versions of foreign texts with their source, Psaki with a detailed analysis of the Norse translation of Parcevals saga (although there is almost nothing on other riddarasögur as the title implies), and Eldevik with a comparison of the two redactions of Trójumanna saga and Ovid’s Heroides. Jochens and Pórunn Sigurðardóttir use literary texts to illuminate their more socio-historical studies of Norse culture: the former of the patterns of Viking settlement; the latter of women farmers. Louis-Jensen’s contribution argues for the emendation of the famous phrase Mikil verða herðarverk in chapter 49 of Laxdæla saga on paleographical grounds. She explains convincingly how the emended version Mikil verða hér nú dagsverkin fits in with the saga’s use of the Brynhildr legend. Borovsky’s study looks at the uses of the term blandinn in eddic poetry and suggests that the later uses in Njáls saga link their recipients to the past, and specifically links Hallgerðr to “values of the past” (11). Swenson concentrates on Hávamál, reading it as a ‘ritual discourse’ which presents women as apart from the masculine community yet connected to it by desire (279). Kalinke’s article is a thorough structural analysis of Viglundar saga as bridal-quest romance, and Scott’s contribution is a still useful, if old-fashioned, character analysis of the women in Eyrbyggja saga. Straubhaar uses Clover’s application of Laqueur’s one-sex model to Norse studies to motivate her study of the ambiguous gendering of the female ‘skalds’ Jórunn, Áuðr and Steinunn, and also provides a text and translation of Jórunn’s Sendibít. One hopes this will stimulate further study of the ways in which female skalds push the gender envelope, and indeed of the ways in which the male literary appropriation of female voices can construct or destabilise gender.

As the above summaries indicate, this collection presents a wealth of riches: there is certainly something for most Old Norse scholars here. Whether they will want to buy the entire volume, rather than photocopy the individual article they are most interested in, will probably depend on their budgets and the breadth of their interest in Old Norse women. Cold Counsel is certainly a vital acquisition for any library with an Old Norse-Icelandic collection.

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The aims of this guide are clearly set out in the opening pages of the text. Its relevance is as a handbook guiding the reader through the history of the principal critical concepts and debates on medieval English literature. English literature itself is divided and discussed here under eight thematic headings, each given its own chapter. The first theme is ‘authorship’ and the last is ‘identity’, with ‘textual form’, ‘genre’ and ‘gender’ amongst other keenly debated topics. These divisions, as well as making the book accessible to all, highlight an interdisciplinary aspect of the book which invites a broader scope than the title may suggest. Although aimed specifically at an undergraduate audience with limited critical knowledge, this text provides a useful source to be dipped into by students of the medieval period more generally.

The coverage offered by the guide is clearly established in the two contents pages (the first arranged thematically, the second by Middle English text or author) and an italicised outline is provided for each chapter. Each author follows the formula of providing an (inevitably relatively brief) history of critical debate on the chosen theme and then exploring these debates through extracts from works which take a
variety of approaches. This method highlights a good range of questions relevant to the student of the medieval period, such as the extent to which the text provides a window onto the author and the medieval context, and the ways in which this approach is itself questioned by modern interpretation and analysis. By considering poetic and non-poetic texts from Chaucer and Malory to Margery Kempe and the Paston Letters, literature in its broadest sense is evaluated for its content and composition. The bibliographic references in the chapter notes, and the overall bibliography, are clear and well presented making them quickly accessible to the reader. Together, the literature of the period, and its subsequent criticisms and interpretations, are outlined in a way which provides a basis for understanding an expanding field of study.

Inevitably a book this size cannot hope to deal comprehensively with every aspect of such an expansive field of study. The reader would, perhaps, have benefited from greater consideration of how the texts have survived, and their initial modes of communication, for the possible relevance this has on the form of the text, its audience and interpretations. A glossary would also be a useful addition, especially if it offered guidance for the uninitiated reader into the terminology of modernist and post-modernist criticism. Overall, however, this book achieves its aims by considering the medieval texts themselves, and avoids concentrating on Chaucer to the detriment of others. As an
entry point into the field of criticism and debate, it provides a helpful basis for reference and further interdisciplinary study.

Annabel King

Reading

This book is a selection from the poems written by Eustache Deschamps during the 14th century in France. Seventy-two poems out of the 1500-odd poems composed by Deschamps are included, one of them actually an extract from a much longer work, Le miroir de mariage. Two introductions open the book: the first and longer one is by the literary historians I. S. Laurie and D. M. Sinnreich-Levi; the second, shorter one by the poet D. Curzon and the screenwriter J. Fiskin. Their collaboration is an original one between two scholars and two professional writers, who had planned at the same time but in different places to translate Deschamps’s poetry and finally met and achieved it together in five years. A lengthy biography of the author, where his originality is discussed, is supported by helpful analysis of his work and by explanation of more technical issues, such as the poetic forms used by Deschamps. The editors also give at this point the criteria governing the selection of the poems (basically their artistic quality, their appeal to a modern reader and the translation possibilities they offer). The translation principles are explained both by the academics and by the poets, who tried to stick to the original text as much as possible. Any alteration to a poem is noted. In every case they have done their best to follow Deschamps’s style even if it meant losing rhymes and on the whole the translation manages to keep the spirit of the original work. For example in the ‘virelai’ number 23 (editors’ own numbering system): ‘Oez de la
nonnette/Comme a le cuer joly/ S'ordre ne ly puert plere.' became ‘Listen to the little nun/ whose heart is full of fun/ and wishes convent life were done.’

Each poem is presented with its translation in modern English on the facing page, but the notes, including points on editing and translating problems, are at the end of the book; similarly, the notes to the Introduction are at the end of that section. This can be annoying when using the book. Two indexes close the book, one of proper names and the other of the works of Deschamps; there is also a helpfully full bibliography. There is no glossary, but all vocabulary difficulties are explained in the notes.

This volume is intended to give access to Deschamps’ poetry to a wide readership, and the explanations of types of poem and rhymes should be very helpful. This is a good introduction to this medieval author, and we await a complete edition of Deschamps’ work with the same quality of translation.

Natalie Joseph
Reading
In this comprehensive undergraduate guide to Chaucer, Steve Ellis brings together a team of 36 scholars who each provide a short chapter on their particular area of expertise. These chapters are grouped into five sections: Historical Contexts, Literary Contexts, Readings, Afterlife and Study Resources. This, together with a detailed contents page, enables the undergraduate to navigate what at first appears as an overwhelming amount of topics. At the end of each chapter is a bibliography, and these are expanded on in the two chapters in the Study Resources section. This book thus constitutes an excellent introductory guide to Chaucer for the student making the leap from 'A' level to university study.

The ‘Historical Contexts’ section contains particularly informative chapters on ‘Society and Politics’ (S. H. Rigby) and ‘Religion’ (J. Rhodes), providing background knowledge on the medieval world essential to any student of medieval literature. The ‘Literary Contexts’ section introduces the student to the ‘Classical’ (H. Cooper), ‘English’ (W. Scase), ‘French’ (H. Phillips), ‘Italian’ (N. Havely) and ‘Biblical’ (V. Edden) literary traditions relevant to Chaucer. The ‘Readings’ section outlines eight different analytical approaches to his works, among them ‘Modern Chaucer Criticism’ (E. Robertson), ‘Feminisms’ (G. Ashton) and ‘New Historicism’ (S. Federico). There is a natural progression through the chapters in these first three sections in relation to references to Chaucer’s works, with more detailed examples increasing as the book is read through. For students to get the most out of the chapters it would be advisable to familiarise themselves
with the Riverside Chaucer, from which all the quotations and references
are taken.

The ‘Afterlife’ section concentrates on reactions to Chaucer from the
fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries. The chapter on ‘Chaucer in
Performance’ (K. J. Harty) will perhaps appeal particularly to the younger
readership of the book. The final section, ‘Study Resources’, contains an
up-to-date and useful ‘Printed Resources’ chapter (M. Allen). Sensible
advice is given regarding Internet searches in the ‘Electronic Resources’
chapter (P. Semper), which is invaluable to the undergraduate student
attempting to navigate and assess the massive amount of online material.
There is a comprehensive bibliography of Internet sites at the end of the
chapter which the student can be confident are reliable and accurate in
terms of content.

This is not only a guide to Chaucer specifically, but also an informative
guide to the medieval world. The undergraduate student would be well
served by this compilation, and the content would be accessible to the
interested ‘A’ level student; making Chaucer. An Oxford Guide a
worthwhile investment to those studying, or intending to study, Chaucer at
university level.

Lisa Clark,

Reading,
This volume is a collection of some 13 essays (not counting the introduction) by the leading names of present-day Celtic studies, encompassing the key issues in Medieval Welsh, Irish, Breton and Cornish scholarship, but with the non-Celticist firmly in mind. All quotes are translated into English, and very little prior knowledge of the texts discussed is assumed, even in the case of canonical works such as the *Mabinogi*. The resulting book is both accessible and rigorous, and should help to raise awareness of a literary tradition that tends all too often to be marginalised (or indeed ignored). In the Introduction the editor, Helen Fulton, reminds the reader that texts that may be termed ‘Celtic’ are potentially written in any one of six languages (Irish, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, Breton and Scottish Gaelic), with the cultural and political diversity that this implies, though in the case of medieval texts the overwhelming majority of the extant material is in Welsh and Irish - a fact reflected in the table of contents.

The opening group of essays considers the origins of literature in the different Celtic countries. John Koch’s ‘Why was Welsh literature written down?’ scrutinises the works of the Cynfeirdd (which celebrate events of the mid sixth to the mid-seventh century, though one elegy, the *Marwnad Cunedda*, laments a fifth-century figure) for linguistic clues regarding the transmission of early Welsh poetry; the impetus for the creation of the first Welsh written literature is thus connected by Koch to the politics of seventh-century Northumbria. John Carey considers the *Lebor Gabála* and the importance of genealogical material in the construction of the legendary history of Ireland, while David N. Dumville explores the manuscript evidence for text production (and reading) in medieval Brittany, 800-1100, before the Breton cathedral schools and monasteries turned away from the native vernacular in favour of French. Medieval Cornish literature, which consists mainly of religious plays written in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is examined by O. J. Padel for evidence of allusions to oral traditions and their possible connection with Welsh and Breton material. These essays show clearly the importance of mutual interaction with neighbouring cultures for our understanding of medieval Celtic texts.

The remaining essays analyse the socio-cultural assumptions underlying the medieval Welsh and Irish works that have come down to us. Robin Stacey Chapman discusses the relation between literature and legal and jurisprudential texts in
medieval Ireland and Wales, while Thomas Owen Clancy focuses more specifically on the concepts of court, king and justice in the Ulster Cycle, for which Clancy advocates a place in the literary canon alongside the matter of Arthur, Charlemagne or Alexander. The career of the Welsh poet Llywarch Brydydd y Moch (fl. approx. 1175-1215) and what it reveals of the role of court poets in the Realpolitik of medieval Wales is investigated by Esther Feer and Nerys Ann Jones, and the possible function of the Mabinogi as a Welsh ‘Mirror of Princes’ is studied by Helen Fulton. Kaarina Hollo considers the evidence for formal laments for the dead in seventh-to-twelfth-century Ireland, in particular in connection with Easter liturgical drama, while Joseph Falaky Nagy, Kristen Lee Over and Morgan T. Davies demonstrate the fruitfulness of modern critical approaches for our understanding of the thirteenth-century (Irish) Acallam na Senòrach, the three Arthurian ‘romances’ (rhamant) of the Welsh ‘Mabinogion’, and the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym, respectively. Finally, issues of cultural adaptation are tackled by Erich Poppe, in relation to the Early Modern Irish adaptations of the Middle English romances of Guy of Warwick and Beues of Hamtoun (themselves adaptations of the Anglo-Norman romances Gui de Warewic and Boeve de Haumtone). Post-colonial theory proves to be a useful conceptual tool, providing insights into the response of Welsh poets and writers to both the cultural imperialism implicitly inherent in the French romance (Over, ‘Transcultural change: romance to rhamant’) and the shifting sense of identity of the Welsh nobility as English political influence increasingly made itself felt (Davies, ‘Dafydd ap Gwilym and the shadow of colonialism’).

In conjunction, these essays build up the image of culturally self-confident societies whose literatures were neither isolated from nor subordinate to those of their English or French neighbours. Helen Fulton’s aim was to show the scholarly world that Celtic literature is not only a rich field to plough in its own right, but that it can also shed potentially important light on other medieval literatures – including that of England.

Francoise Le Saux
Reading
This is the latest in Blackwell's series which aims to bring informative and lively introductions to students with no prior knowledge of Chaucer's literary work or the context within which it was written. John C. Hirsh has published extensively on mysticism and medieval spirituality and he brings this knowledge to his interpretation of the *Canterbury Tales*. The seven chapters of the book are organised thematically (e.g. Others, God, and Death), which facilitates comparisons across the tales and puts the emphasis onto the texts rather than the fictional pilgrim-narrators.

Each chapter contains helpful references to the scholarly studies which have given rise to current interpretations (although the use of endnotes rather than footnotes is slightly frustrating). The chapters are also accompanied by woodcuts from Caxton’s 1483 edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, and these emphasise the contextual approach. Hirsh helpfully concludes some of the chapters by restating his aims and looking at how close he came to achieving them; this allows the reader to follow his arguments closely. However, the overall Conclusion is disappointing; at only two pages it does not allow the arguments to be properly developed. More helpful is the synopsis of each Tale found at the end of the book, although Hirsh supplies sufficient detail in the individual chapters to enable the new student to follow the arguments. A final touch helpful for students is the provision of a Select Bibliography related to the individual themes of the book.
Chapter One deals with Chaucer’s life and takes the place of an introduction. Here, Hirsh draws many inferences from the small amount of information available; although his suggestion that Chaucer was excluded from the court of Richard II is based on very slender evidence. Nevertheless, the emphasis on social context, which runs throughout the book, is very useful for those new to the period. The style of writing throughout is both lively and accessible. The chapter on ‘The Others’ looks at how the pilgrims defined themselves and who were ‘the others’. Hirsh draws a comparison between ‘real’ and ‘ideal’ characterisation. His idea that Chaucer, like many others, had Wycliffite sympathies before the Peasants Revolt is both original and controversial. However, he does not fully explain his reasoning and the argument does not entirely succeed. In the chapter on ‘Death’, Hirsh interestingly suggests that Chaucer was looking towards his own death when he wrote the Canterbury Tales. In support of this, Hirsh explores the idea that Chaucer’s ‘retraction’ was very similar to the ‘Seven Interrogations’ which were questions asked by a priest to make sure that a dying person’s beliefs were orthodox and that they were in a state of grace. This is just one of many occasions where Hirsh’s thorough knowledge of medieval spirituality really shines through.

Overall the book is a valuable introduction, both to the Tales and to recent scholarship, and it will encourage undergraduates to think analytically about Chaucer’s writing from a variety of perspectives.

Christopher Stout
Reading.

Fulk and Cain’s *A History of Old English Literature* is the first major work of its kind since Greenfield and Calder’s *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*, and represents a comprehensive survey of the range of Old English texts with a heavy historicist bias. Its major strengths are the attention to sociocultural contexts, the Anglo-Latin background, textual issues, and the ideological motives of scholars, and the inclusion of extensive bibliographical references to recent criticism. It will certainly replace Greenfield and Calder, although students will want to read alongside it the Cambridge Companion, with the greater space that work gives to literary matters. At £19.99 for the paperback version, it is within the reach of many undergraduates, and it is an essential addition to all academic libraries.

The introduction provides an overview of the material covered in the rest of the book, with an excellent brief account of Anglo-Saxon history and culture. It also introduces concepts such as heroic diction, kennings, variation and poetic tropes. The first chapter, with the somewhat Victorian-sounding title ‘The Chronology and Varieties of Old English Literature’, fulfils the dual purpose of acknowledging the usual anxieties about the dating and generic grouping of Old English texts, while also providing a place to discuss texts that do not fit conveniently into any of the other chapters, including glosses, lists, ‘notes’, charms, riddles and *Apollonius of Tyre*. It ends with a short paragraph which briefly but crucially indicates Fulk and Cain’s concerns that modern readers should appreciate the importance of manuscript and other empirical studies, should not retain anachronistic assumptions about the inherent worth of ‘the literary’, and should strive to interpret all texts in terms of the service they may have performed for the Anglo-Saxon church. These concerns remain evident throughout the work.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature of the Alfredian Period, concentrating on the function of the Alfredian translations and their socio-cultural context. Chapter 3 focuses on the Old English homily, although it starts by acknowledging the difficulty of distinguishing sermons from homilies. It considers the Vercelli and Blickling homilies, and those of Ælfric and Wulfstan, particularly the former’s *Catholic Homilies* and anxieties over translation and doctrinal orthodoxy, and the latter’s *Sermo Lupi* and distinctive style. There is of course thus a little overlap with Rachel S. Anderson’s chapter on saints’ legends, which is also structured differently from most of the other chapters, being divided into five smaller sections. Another difference in this chapter is a welcome attention to gender issues in Ælfric’s ‘vernacular prose legends’ and the anonymous life of Euphrosyne. The ‘vernacular verse legends’ are summarised and an overview given of critical approaches, although this is a little patchy for *Juliana*. Chapter 5 on ‘Biblical Literature’ mainly concerns the Junius manuscript, but also reviews biblical commentaries, glosses and translation. In the discussion of biblical verse there is a heavy emphasis on textual matters, where one might have expected, for instance, more discussion of Howe’s argument that the Exodus is seen as an image of the Anglo-Saxon migration (cf. p. 250, n. 20). The brevity of the treatment of *Judith* also makes this section less student-friendly.

It is in the next chapter’s discussion of liturgical and devotional texts that the book’s strengths become strikingly evident, and it will surely succeed in its aim of stimulating further study of these neglected texts (147). We discover interesting tidbits such as the fact that Bede thought there were 72 languages in the world (122), that most of us pronounce Ruthwell (as in the Ruthwell Cross) incorrectly (144), and that the *Menologium* sometimes locates festivals in relation to the beginning of months and seasons (clearly Anglo-Saxon summers were more reliable than ours, described in terms of ‘sun-bright days’ and ‘warm weather’, 133). The discussion of the penitentials is understandably based on Fulk’s recent article in the Calder memorial collection (described in the book as forthcoming), but goes into greater detail about
the manuscript attestation than is evident elsewhere in the book. It is both a strength and a weakness of this chapter that it is very difficult to tell which of the texts considered are at the centre of the modern canon of Old English texts, and which at the margins.

Chapter 7 moves onto legal, scientific and scholastic works. One would like more detailed discussion of the nature of lawcodes, and the problems and possibilities one encounters in interpreting them (as too with the penitentials of chapter 6). The discussions here are particularly student friendly – the authors perhaps conscious of most students’ utter ignorance of the subject matter – with admirably clear accounts, for instance, of writs (149) and computus (155) (contrast the use without gloss of the term chiliasm on p. 76). There is another reference to Fulk’s then forthcoming article in the discussion of the Liber monstrorum, but one wishes that he had felt able to include a little of his excellent discussion there of the joke at the beginning of the work about the frequency of encounters with male transvestites. Too often in this book, the authors seem deliberately to refrain from ‘literary’ discussion of the texts.

The two final chapters deal with the texts more familiar to undergraduate students, and the book’s presentation thus effectively provides a fresh context for these well-known works, an approach which seems preferable to the common practice of starting with the familiar and accessible and moving to the margins. Chapter 8 contains some salutary remarks to the effect that the modern dislike for the universal and the compilation of lists was foreign to the Anglo-Saxons. This dislike is countered by concise and interesting discussion of wisdom literature and the inclusion of amusing details such as the quotation of Durham Proverb 11:

“‘Nonetheless I would not trust you though you walked well,’ said he who saw a witch passing along on her head”. The second part of the chapter looks at ‘lyric poetry’, a designation obviously intended to avoid the problematic definition of the ‘elegy’, though this is discussed at length (179-82). In keeping with the authors’ distrust of formalist approaches to literary texts, the discussion of the ‘usual suspects’ concentrates on issues of genre, textual coherence, analogues, and the problems of interpretation. Indeed they seem to revel in the “indeterminacy of meaning” which is “a quality everywhere obvious in Old English literature” (184). Similarly, the final chapter which contains extended discussion of Beowulf, then briefer accounts of The Fight at Finnsburh, Waldere, Deor, Widsith, Maldon and Brunanburh, avoids literary analysis. The Beowulf section constitutes an overview of critical approaches which manages amongst other things to include appraisal of linguistic and metrical evidence for dating (as one might expect from Fulk), analogues (where Fjalldal is almost ignored on the connections with Grettis saga), and explanations of variation, envelope patterns, ring composition and interlace structure. The discussion of Maldon clearly brings out the artificiality of the ideal of dying with one’s lord, but bizarrely (given that the notes reference Woolf and Frank) suggests that it is adopted from “the conventions of heroic verse” (222). The authors see Brunanburh and Maldon as marking a decline in heroic literature before the Conquest.

The conclusion briefly charts the history of Anglo-Saxonism and the cultural work that Old English literature has been and may be asked to perform, with some interesting references to works such as Dvorak’s 1870 opera Alfred and Milton’s writings on the Anglo-Saxons. The authors end with stimulating comments on the ways Old English studies can contribute to other fields, although the emphasis on radical indeterminacy in literary interpretation seems overstated, and there is a certain concluding bias towards the kind of studies for which Fulk is famous. There are thirty pages of notes, giving valuable bibliographical references, seventy pages of ‘Works Cited’ and a brief index mostly of works and authors. As this account makes evident, there is much to admire in this book – the authors’ formidable command of both primary and secondary material, the attention paid to relatively neglected works, the fresh perspectives on more familiar texts, and the sheer comprehensiveness of this concise yet lively work. It will surely provide an invaluable reference point for students and a stimulus to research for teachers.
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The twelfth-century, Jersey-born poet Wace is, paradoxically, both well-known and fundamentally neglected. Interest in his Roman de Brut has tended to be confined to the Arthurian section of the work (where we find the first mention in medieval literature of the Round Table), whilst his Roman de Rou still suffers in academic circles from a form of generic uncertainty – is it literature, historiography, history? As for the three religious poems by Wace that have come down to us, they have typically been ignored, or dismissed as early works by a writer who had not yet managed to secure ‘courtly’ patronage. Dr Paradisi’s book is therefore a landmark in Wace criticism: she gives all five of the poet’s extant works due consideration, each on their own terms, and in a manner allowing the reader to discern continuities over a lifetime of writing. As the title of the study indicates, the key issue investigated by Paradisi is that of Wace’s attitude towards historical discourse. This is peculiarly apt, as all five of his extant works would have been perceived by his contemporaries as being historiographical in nature, being translations of Latin authorities recounting past events.

Paradisi’s monograph is divided into four parts, three of which are devoted directly to the poet. Part One investigates Wace’s methodology as hagiographer. The links between hagiography and medieval historiography are explored. La Vie de Sainte Marguerite, La Conception Nostre Dame et La Vie de Saint Nicolas are placed within the context of their manuscript tradition, and Wace’s handling of his material is analysed in the light of his Latin sources. The Prologues and the interventions by the narrator are given particular attention, and provide valuable insights into Wace’s attitude towards his own writerly activities, and the place of clerics and writers in general within society. Far from being lightweight bits of poetry, the three hagiographical works are shown to be highly complex and at the cutting edge of the intellectual trends of the first half of the twelfth century.

The second part of the book is devoted to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae, an essential step in any attempt to comprehend what Wace was doing in his Roman de Brut. Paradisi stresses the unorthodox view of the past projected by Geoffrey, and reveals the extent to which his image of Rome, in particular, went against the mainstream historical discourse of his time. The third part, on the Roman de Brut, then demonstrates how Wace adopted a more conventional historical
programme than that of Geoffrey, using as his main source the First Variant Version of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, whose anonymous redactor had sought to bring the galfridian material more in line with ‘standard’ histories. Paradisi explores the implications of the poet’s recurrent emphasis on onomastics and language change, and considers the political undercurrents implicit in the treatment of the passage of dominion from the British to the English, and in the way the history of the insular Church is depicted. Throughout the work, a strong didactic intent is shown to be present, as in the hagiographical poems. A separate chapter within Part Three is devoted to the Arthurian section, and more especially to the significance of the omission by Wace of the Prophecies of Merlin. The final part is concerned with the *Roman de Rou*, Wace’s history of the dukes of Normandy. This Fourth Part is concerned essentially with questions of a textual-historical nature, in particular the relation between the four ‘parties’ of the work: i.e., the ‘Chronique Ascendante’, charting out the material of the work; the ‘Première Partie’, in octosyllabic couplets, recounting the adventures of the pirate Hasting; the ‘Deuxième Partie’, in alexandrines grouped in monorhyme stanzas of varying length, from Rou to the maturity of Duke Richard I; and the ‘Troisième Partie’, in octosyllabic couplets, from Richard I to the battle of Tinchebray. The issue of Henry II’s patronage (and his withdrawal of it) is discussed, as is Wace’s use of his sources; though the tools of the literary critic falter here, as much of the *Rou* is no longer historiography derived from authoritative Latin texts, but history, based on first-hand accounts (including family tradition). Wace’s interest in the fallibility of human memory and the duty of the historian is however shown to have endured to the end of his career.

This is an important book, heralding the end of the still widespread misapprehension that Wace wrote romances (an unfortunate consequence of the titles by which his two major works have come to be known). One looks forward to its appearing in English translation – as surely it must.

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The present volume is what in Germany would be called a useful ‘Handbuch’ in that it brings together under one cover a number of key articles on the French and German Grail romances from the latter decades. It is therefore particularly adapted for student use since more seasoned scholars will have come across many of the articles where they were first published (the volume also contains newly-commissioned articles). A welcome augmentation to what is promised in the title of the volume comes in the form of articles on other texts of the Perceval tradition such as Peredur, Perlesvaus, Sir Perceval of Galles, the Norse Parceval, as well as later reincarnations of the hero in the work of Malory, Wagner and in modern English and American literature.

The volume is preceded by a very useful introduction by the editors to the plethora of texts in the tradition. (It might be noted that this follows in the benign tradition of the Arthurian Characters and Themes series under which this volume appears: Dhira B. Mahoney’s 115 page Introduction to the Grail volume [2000] is exemplary in this regard.) Mahoney herself has a contribution in this volume (Malory’s Percivale: A Case of Competing Genealogies? pp. 253-65) in which she argues that Malory’s hero is a ‘split personality’ (p. 263) being partly informed by the spiritual Queste tradition and partly by that of the Prose Tristan and the Roman du Graal (which prioritise lignage and chivalric values proper). A reshaping of genetic elements is found by Norris J. Lacy in his comparative study of Perlesvaus and Perceval (pp. 97-103) where he identifies many ‘systematic and purposeful departures from Chrestien’s text’ (p. 101). The German tradition is well represented in articles by Arthur Groos, Wolfgang Mohr, Dennis Green, Matrianne Wynn and L.P. Johnson (and on Parsifal by Carl Dahlhaus). There is also an article on film versions by Kevin Harty in this well-thought-out and inclusive volume.

I have only one ‘issue’ with a book which gives such comprehensive coverage, which is that perhaps a trifle more might have been introduced on what has recently been termed the ‘Gretchenfrage’ (Erdmuth Döffinger-Lange) of Perceval/Parzival studies, namely, ‘Wie hast du’s mit Gauvain, bzw. Gawan?’ Even though the series properly foregrounds individual characters some mention might have been made of a knight whom some scholars (such as Peter Wapnewski) have identified as Parzival’s alter ego. I would therefore recommend complementing a reading of this book with two further publications: 1. Erdmuthe Döffinger-Lange, Der Gauvain-Teil in Chrétien’s Conte du Graal. Forschungsbericht und Episodenkommentar (Heidelberg : Winter, 1998); 2. Sonja Emmerling, Geschlechterbeziehungen in den Gawan-Büchern des ‘Parzival’: Wolframs Arbeit an einem literarischen Modell (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003).

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The days when Gender Studies were applied almost exclusively to the post-industrial world are now well over; medievalists have seized upon theories originally evolved by feminist writers, and reshaped them into highly effective tools in their own field. The ‘Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages’ series launched by the University of Wales Press under the aegis of Denis Renevey and Diane Watt is proving to be a valuable forum for debate in this process, with two publications that, each in their own way, add to our understanding of medieval attitudes towards religion, and the way in which various aspects of the Christian faith informed responses to texts, events and characters (whether literary or historical).

Teresa Reed’s *Shadows of Mary* is a good example of how contemporary medievalists reinterpret mainstream literary theory in the light of the belief systems underlying medieval sources. Contrary to what might have been assumed from its title, the book deals essentially with Middle English works: Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale* and *Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale*; *Pearl*; the thirteenth-century *Seinte Marharete*; and the *English Trotula*, with references to Middle English theatre and some religious sources (especially apocryphal material). The focus is very much on the female body and its meaning(s), with the figure of the Virgin Mary used as key and guide to the interpretation of the characters and situations in the texts considered. The introduction – ‘Going by Contraries: Eve, Mary and Meaning in the Medieval Church’ – investigates the way in which the Virgin is worked into the depiction of fictional characters as diverse as the Wife of Bath or Constance. Mary is shown to be the locus of paradox: virgin yet mother; defined by her physicality, yet attaining transcendence through, rather than despite, her materiality. The Virgin is the inverse of Eve (Ave versus Eva), but this also
draws attention to the essential kinship between Mary and the rest of womankind.

Chapter 1 (‘Shadows of the Law: Death in the Man of Law’s Tale’) explores the unique status of Mary, the tensions inherent in it, and the strategies used by medieval writers and thinkers to come to terms with these tensions. The apocryphal gospels present Mary as a girl with a typical female body, who has to leave the temple to get married when she comes of age, but whose place in salvational history contradicts the established boundaries of the human body – and of human law. Hence the relevance of the figure of Mary in the tale told by Chaucer’s Man of Law: the relationship of his heroine, Constance, with her mothers-in-law parallels that between Mary and her inverted double, Eve. The fact that the narrator vilifies the Sultaness as being both a ‘feyned womman’, a snake in women’s clothes, and a typical woman, ‘Eva’, the instrument of Satan, shows the structural limits of the narrator’s system of meaning, based on and expressed through examples and metaphors that are not always compatible. Whereas Constance in the Man of Law’s Tale is repeatedly shown praying to the Virgin, Marian devotion is conspicuously absent from the tale told by Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, and her Prologue to it. However, Reed argues (Chapter 2) that Alisoun of Bath, through her implicit association with the carnal, fallen nature of Eve, is a narrative construct that draws much of her complexity from the underlying counter-image of Mary. The Wife’s deafness contrasts her with Mary’s total openness to the Word of God; but like Mary in the temple (according to the apocrypha), Alisoun is a weaver; and Mary’s body can no more be bypassed than Alisoun’s. And the fears arising from gender difference mark and define the way in which Alisoun describes herself, just as they shape the way the Virgin is described in clerical discourse. Chapter 3, ‘Dispersing Faith: Seinte Marherete, Maternal Bodies, and Telling Stories’, turns to a character who has more obvious similarities with Mary: St Margaret of Antioch, a virgin martyr who became patron saint of women in childbirth. Reed analyses in this chapter the tension between the sealed, virginal body of the saint and the public exhibition of her tortured flesh, and relates it to the ambivalence towards childbirth. Medieval medicine reflects this tendency to make bodies signify more than their literal physiology, and the English
Trotula explicitly connects the female body with shame, whilst putting that same body on display in a way not dissimilar to Margaret’s torturers. Margaret’s privileged link with Caesarean birth (due to the fact that she made a demonic dragon who tried to swallow her burst in two through the power of the sign of the cross) is likened to the statues of the Virgin that could be opened to reveal depictions of various scenes in the history of salvation. The boundaries of the ‘sealed’ virginal body are breached in both cases, affirming a transcendent dimension to physical experience. The symbols surrounding the Virgin Mary, notes Reed, ‘attempt to name the unnameable’; and this is also true of the fourteenth-century Pearl, where metonymy, alongside metaphor, is seen as a key device in the Pearl-poet’s handling of the transcendental, both in discourse and in form. Reed considers Mary’s role as medium between the human and the divine, between the (failed) old law and the new incarnational law, and identifies ways in which the Pearl-maiden may be aligned with Mary herself. The book has no conclusion, which is regrettable, as the sum of its parts suggests much more than the brief outline provided in the introduction; so while Reed’s analyses of the individual texts are valuable, one has a sense of work unfinished.

Medieval Virginities puts Reed’s study into perspective, and should ideally be read before Shadows of Mary, as it addresses a key issue in the construction of the image of the Virgin: that of virginity. As the title of the volume indicates, the concept is so far from being straightforward that the editors decided to use the term in the plural; and the 12 essays (including the introduction) collected in this book justify their decision. There is a remarkable sense of focus in this volume, due to the excellent Introduction, where the editors provide all the necessary background for even a novice reader in Gender Studies to appreciate the eleven essays that follow, and to the inspired decision to close the collection with Jocelyn Wogan-Brown’s scholarly response to the preceding articles. The approaches represented cover virtually the entire spectrum of theoretical stances in Gender Studies. Sarah Salih explores the use of erotic discourse in medieval mystical texts, analysing problematic passages in the vita of St Gilbert of Sempringham and the Life of Christina of Markyate, and the different ways in which the erotic/mystical experience of
these two virgin protagonists is interpreted. Juliette Dor discusses the possible meanings of the Sheela-na-gig, a grotesque carved female figure displaying exaggerated genitals found in England, Wales and Ireland, usually situated high up in churches or on castle walls. Dor relates these explicitly sexualised figures to polysemous Celtic goddesses that combine opposite traits, such as virginity and motherhood, and suggests that they may have been constructed as an incongruous sign of virginity by medieval sculptors and viewers. Jane Cartwright then analyses medieval Welsh texts relating to female virginity and its testing. Sources include: the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi, where the king’s virgin foot-holder is raped, and her prospective replacement has to undergo a test which results in her public humiliation (and two children); Welsh Arthurian texts featuring magical chastity tests; Welsh law texts; and medical texts. Cartwright notes the concern of medieval Welsh society with controlling female sexuality, together with the tendency to doubt the word of women; and she attributes this to the fact that virginity was an important commodity in the medieval marriage market. However, virginity does not appear to have been otherwise valued, if the relative dearth of financial support for nunneries in Wales is a reliable indicator in such a matter. Similar financial concerns appear in Kim M. Phillips’s study of four English legal documents (dating from the late thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth century) where female virginity is a core issue: a case of abduction and rape; compensation to a woman deflowered in an apparently consensual encounter; a fine levied on a young woman’s premarital sexual activity by her manorial lord; and virginity as an empowering legal identity for a York heiress. The question of male virginity is explored by John Arnold and Joanna Huntington. Arnold investigates the links between chastity, castration and virginity in clerical circles; the virginity of the male cleric is shown to be closely bound to the exercise of willpower and the ability to resist temptation. Huntington then analyses the different Lives of Edward the Confessor, charting the evolution in the way the king’s supposed virginity is depicted as his cult developed.

The remaining essays in the volume approach the theme from a different angle. Anke Bernau discusses the figurative significations of the virginity of Joan of Arc, which becomes a metaphor for historiography itself. Ruth Evans (‘The Jew, the Host and the Virgin martyr: Fantasies of the Sentient Body’) analyses the accounts of ritual
abuse of the Host; the Jew torturing the eucharistic corpus Christi is shown to be aligned with the pagan torturers of (female) virgin martyrs. In this system, virginity is something that can be (re)-acquired, a point illustrated by Margery Kempe’s donning of virginal white despite having given birth to many children. Jonathan Hughes tackles virginity from the point of view of the medieval scientist. Alchemy in particular betrays a real distrust of virginity; the female body, in alchemical discourse, figures the laboratory, and chemical reactions are described in terms of sexual encounters leading to ‘offspring’. This leads to an inversion of the clerical value-system. Hughes also considers medieval medical assumptions, where the maintenance of humoral balance and health was thought to necessitate sexual activity; he links the rise of witchcraft accusations against women towards the end of the Middle Ages with the belief that malignant humours were susceptible to accumulate in women who were not sexually active (especially post-menopausal women). By contrast, Robert Mills’s is a determinedly early-twenty-first-century viewpoint, using post-colonial theory as a conceptual tool to approach the Lives of virgin martyrs such as St Agnes. Jocelyn Wogan-Brown’s concluding essay gives an excellent overview of the salient points contained in the various essays in the volume, and brings the reader back down to earth with the basic anatomy of virginity as depicted in modern medical textbooks, showing that the ‘reality’ of the hymen remains as problematic as ever.

The overall quality of the contributions to this volume is outstanding; in conjunction, they give the reader a comprehensive image of a field of studies that even ten years ago was barely recognised. The only quibble one might express is a tendency in certain articles to unthinking (and anachronistic) anglocentricity. This is a book that all libraries will want to have on their shelves and that will be on many reading lists for years to come.

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The very title, *Understanding Dante*, is a challenge. This has been an objective for scholars for almost seven centuries. Nevertheless, Scott here makes real headway in producing what could be described as the best handbook to the poet’s life and works available to the student today.

By providing an occhiata at the work of such renowned contemporary Dante scholars as Zygmunt Baranski, Robert Hollander, Charles Singleton and Patrick Boyde, as well as by comparing their contributions with those of studiosi of the first half of the twentieth century (such as Croce), Scott succeeds in providing a very comprehensive overview of the development towards, and state of, Dante studies today. This is very much a student’s handbook – one that will find itself dog-eared within the ‘dark wood’ of the Italianist’s bookshelf. Through its twelve chapters, the work will give students the opportunity to read, within the covers of one book, the major academic debates currently taking place over Dante’s opera. For example, Scott provides a clear discussion of the conflicts of opinion over the chronology of Dante’s works. He also provides students with an overview of the allegorical interpretations variously offered by scholars of such controversial figure as Beatrice herself, as well as of the lion, the leopard and the wolf which appear in the first Canto of the *Inferno*. Equally helpful is the analysis of the roles of Virgil, not only as guide to Dante Personaggio in his *magnum opus*, but also as inspiration in Dante Autore’s autodidactic study of philosophy, politics and religion throughout his sojourn in various centres of learning in medieval Italy.
Scott’s love of, and dedication to, the subject of Dante is evident from the outset; he comments, ‘My fervent hope is that this book will instil in others the burning desire I still feel to discover more about a poet who has enthralled so many readers in so many countries.’ He also quotes Montale in saying that the Commedia ‘is, and will remain, the last miracle of world poetry’. These words, which Scott offers at the opening of his book, display the passion which he has put into this, the summary of his life’s work.

To the undergraduate, Scott’s pages on the Commedia, above all else, will prove invaluable. Scott shows the student how Dante must be examined: ‘scholars are obliged to discover as much as possible about medieval literature, society, language, philosophy, history and theology’. He goes on to say that ‘it is clearly impossible for one person to be an expert in all these fields’. Therefore his book provides ‘a sample of the kind of analysis to which the whole poem must be subjected’. Nevertheless, Scott’s work provides broad coverage of the opera of the poet, examining them from a number of angles. His discussion of the Rime shows Dante’s contribution to poetic metre and style, with many references to, and comparisons with, Guinizelli, Cavalcanti and the Sicilian and Provencal schools. The section on the Vita Nova opens the student’s eyes to the theme of courtly love, and to the romance genre which was so widespread in medieval vernacular literature. In writing of the Convivio, Scott puts Bertrand Russell’s comment that Dante ‘was not influential and was hopelessly out of date’ to shame, highlighting Dante’s study of, involvement in, and contribution to the subject of philosophy.

Scott’s work will be an invaluable resource to students, to amateurs, and to academics alike. Its complete, detailed and accurate coverage will appeal to a broad spectrum of Dante aficionados and will go a long way in helping the reader in the massive task of Understanding Dante.


The account of Sir John Mandeville’s (fictitious) travels to the Holy Land, India and Cathay counts among the best-sellers of the late Middle Ages. Originally written in Northern France by a Benedictine monk in the mid 1350s, it was translated into nine languages, and many of the stories in it were taken from their context and circulated independently. Around three hundred manuscripts of the work are still extant, and the popularity of the *Travels* remained strong up to the seventeenth and even eighteenth century. M. C. Seymour’s edition of the Defective Version of the *Travels* will be welcomed by all scholars interested in the history of the diffusion of the text in medieval England. The Defective Version is the oldest English translation of the so-called ‘Insular Version’, an Anglo-French redaction of the original Northern French text which is the origin of all the versions of *Mandeville’s Travels* (both in English and Latin) produced in England. Though incomplete (part of the description of Egypt was missing from the original from which it was translated), the Defective Version was adopted in England as the standard version of the book. It survives in 33 manuscripts (and a half dozen fragments), underlies two medieval conflations, and was the base text for the first printed edition of the work in 1496. The exact date at which the translation was made is unknown, but Seymour suggests some time around 1385; most of the extant manuscripts date from the first half of the fifteenth century. The very wealth of manuscript witnesses made this edition a daunting task. Seymour chose as base text that preserved in Queen’s College, Oxford MS 383, one of the earliest surviving manuscripts; it also belongs to a textual family that is more complete than other English copies of the work. The avowed aim of the editor is to produce a substantial reconstruction of the archetype of the extant manuscripts, rather than the nowadays more usual emphasis on the individual witness. This was possible mainly because of the low incidence of variation (other than orthographic or linguistic) between the various manuscripts, which means that readers can find their
way around the critical apparatus without too many problems. The Appendix, providing extracts (from 23 manuscripts and the first printed text of the work) of passages that were used to determine manuscript affiliation, has the added advantage of giving an idea of the variations in spelling and language within the corpus. However, identifying which manuscript bears a specific reading is not straightforward, even though the introduction lists the various witnesses in as clear and systematic a way as one could reasonably expect; scholars wishing to make a detailed study of the textual history of the Defective Version will still need to resort directly to the manuscripts. The Commentary identifies for the reader places, people and events mentioned in the text, and is a mine of useful information; while the Textual Commentary reviews the difficult passages in the text and elucidates them with reference to reading of the French ‘Insular Version’. Finally, the Glossary gives forms and meanings of words ‘not immediately recognizable in modern English’. In fact, the novice reader is likely to find both the Glossary and the Textual Commentary rather unhelpful; knowledge of the grammar and syntax of Middle English is taken for granted, while the orthographic vagaries of the medieval text means that even commonplace words (especially verbs) might not be ‘immediately recognized’ by the untrained eye. This is an unapologetically scholarly edition, intended for reference rather than light reading.

Rosemary Tzanaki’s study on the reception of Mandeville’s Book in England and France, by contrast, is accessibly – even entertainingly – written, with a wealth of illustrations taken from various manuscripts and early printed books. Responses to the work are placed under five headings, which are discussed in as many chapters: pilgrimage, geography, romance, history and theology. Tzanaki notes that from the outset, the work was intended for a wide audience, written in French rather than in Latin; this led to a multiplicity of interpretations. Indications of these may be found in: the modifications brought to the text by medieval redactors and translators; marginal inscriptions by readers; the nature of the other texts present in the manuscripts preserving the Book; and the choice of illustrations in both manuscripts and early printed texts. The basic text used in the study is that of the Continental French Version, the earliest surviving text of Mandeville’s Travels, against which the Insular French Version, the English and Latin versions and the so-called Liège version are compared. The number of manuscripts examined (73) is daunting, and this is scholarship at its best. The investigation of attitudes towards the theme of pilgrimage in the work reveals a tension between the devotional intent of the ‘original’ French author and the audience’s reading of the text as a wonder narrative. The marginalia in the texts of the Book do however show that the information on the
Holy Land was considered important by many readers, even if the pilgrimage route itself did not arouse much interest. The progressive move away from reading Mandeville as a pilgrimage account goes hand in hand with an increasingly literal and practical use of the work, as a sort of geographical guide. In particular, the possibility of circumnavigation around a round earth arouses special interest among later redactors and readers. The use of history in the Continental French Version as a background to biblical events and as a means of linking past, present and future is also literalised, reduced by later readers to mere historical data. Similarly, romance-motifs in the Book, originally subordinated to the moral and didactic intent of the narrative as a whole, tend to be read on their own terms, as entertainment. Some later versions of the text excise the moralising commentary, whilst others add romance-type elements to the narrative. Tzanaki further notes that Mandeville’s Book was frequently included in compendia with romances, and that later authors freely used tales from Mandeville in their own romances. Illustrators also took particular interest in depicting the romance elements contained in the Book. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the theological and philosophical issues explored by Mandeville’s Book were ignored or misunderstood by many of its later readers. The basic principle underlying the text, described by Tzanaki as one of tolerance and ‘a faith in natural goodness and belief’ (p.21), is marginalized by redactors, readers and illustrators more interested in monsters and marvels, and even inverted by audiences who refused to accept this benign image of the exotic Other.

The methodology evolved by Dr Tzanaki proves to be a highly effective tool in charting a process whereby a text originally informed by abstract thought is increasingly literalised over the course of two centuries, until it eventually lost its credibility. The study also reveals the extent to which Mandeville’s Book was integrated into both the popular and learned cultures of the late medieval and early modern periods.

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Self-billed as ‘a short introduction’ to Old English literature for the general reader and students encountering the subject for the first time, it is hard to see how this book could be substantially improved for its intended purpose. As the publisher’s blurb indicates, Donoghue structures his material around a set of what he calls ‘figures’, invoking medieval figural interpretive strategies, although the author hastens to disavow ‘transcendental claims’ for his readings (xiii). Although initially unsettling to readers used to the generic or chronological orderings of more traditional overviews, Donoghue’s figures of the vow, the hall, the miracle, the pulpit and the scholar, allow him to present close readings of a surprising number of Old English texts within a cultural and historical framework.

The ‘Introduction’ outlines a few key events and dates, sets the parameters for the book’s coverage, and explains the rationale behind the book’s structure according to ‘figures’. As Donoghue readily admits, the figures selected are somewhat arbitrary – many others could have been used. However, his chosen set succeed in his purpose of flexibly exploring multiple relations between a range of Old English texts without the constraints of the uncertain chronology and dubious traditional generic groupings of his material, although he does seem to accept Anglo-Saxon genres of histories, saints’ lives and homilies here (but not riddles) while blurring their boundaries later (48, 84). Donoghue disavows interest in manuscript context, stating quite rightly that this is well covered in the relevant editions, but his decision to say little about “poetic meter and kennings” is more problematic. His reasoning is that these demand “a good knowledge of the language” (xiv), but, given the detailed linguistic discussions at various points throughout the book (11, 45, 68, 75, 81), one wonders whether kennings are really more difficult to introduce than concepts of ekphrasis and prosopopoeia (75) or less useful. Donoghue’s stated audience is “students taking introductory Old English classes, students reading the texts in translation, and general readers” (xiv), thus he cites texts from standard readers or in his own clear and readable translations. He limits himself, paraphrasing Alfred, to “the most necessary texts for students to know” but this comprises an abundant selection of Old English works about which few teachers could complain, although occasionally the discussion of some texts is so summary as to serve little purpose other than introducing the student to their existence (e.g. that of Widsith, 55), presumably owing to considerations of space.

Donoghue’s first chapter on ‘The Vow’ explores how formal utterances function as “both a theme and at times a condition for the very existence of Old English literature”. After a brief discussion of an 11th century legal dispute and Ælfric and Wulfstan’s use of oaths and promises, Donoghue presents lively close readings of vows and speech acts in Wulf and Eadwacer, The Wife’s Lament, The Husband’s Message, The Battle of Maldon, The Battle of Brunanburh and Beowulf. It seems a little dubious to homogenise legal and religious vows and magical charms (7), and discussion of the validity of the concept of selfhood at this period seems necessary in the (attractive) reading of The Wife’s Lament (11). However, Donoghue evokes the poems with economy and skill, and is particularly good on the anachronistic ideology of Maldon (17), though this concept might profitably have been drawn into the discussion of Brunanburh (22), which, like several texts, also receives attention later in the book (113). This method of discussing texts in two or more contexts works best in the discussion of Beowulf which ends ‘The Vow’ and begins ‘The Hall’ and serves to remind students that these readings are partial and encourage them to dig into the texts for themselves. The second chapter briefly considers actual Anglo-Saxon halls but at once sensibly cautions against any easy association of these with literary halls such as Heorot (31). Rather it assesses the cultural significance of these buildings as representative of social order and civilisation. Donoghue draws out the positive uses of hall-joys and their ironic inversion
in the anti-hall of the Grendelkin, or the parodic manipulation of heroic diction in Judith (39-40). The heroic recasting of Exodus, skilfully and economically evoked, leads Donoghue on to discuss the four levels of medieval Christian exegesis, which he explains simply using Dante’s ‘Letter to Can Grande’ (43), before moving onto the language and themes of Genesis B, where heaven and hell are depicted as Germanic hall and anti-hall (44-6). He then changes tack to consider the hall as ruin or absence within the elegiac poems The Ruin, The Wanderer, and The Seafarer, although the brief problematisation of the category of ‘elegy’ here could be drawn out further, especially since these pages are indexed under ‘wisdom literature’ (48, 140). The discussion of the lord-retainer bond in The Wanderer begins to make an interesting point about same-sex affective attachments, but rather coyly refrains from pursuing further the differences in construction of Anglo-Saxon and modern English same-sex behaviour (49). The end of the chapter seems to have been hit hard by the editing hand, with an unhelpfully brief discussion of Deor and Widsith (53, 55).

The transition to the third chapter on ‘The Miracle’ is surrounded by two iconic moments from Bede – the first, Edwin’s ealdorman’s metaphor of the sparrow flying through the hall, the second, the story of Cædmon referred to on the first page of the book (ix, 56). This leads onto a discussion of Cædmon’s Hymn (where some detailed points on modern editorial principles and Anglo-Saxon orthography are made), Anglo-Saxon formulas and the translation of Latin texts into the vernacular. A brief characterisation of hagiographic texts follows, with a summary discussion of Guthlac A and B, Juliana, Andreas, and a fuller account of The Fates of the Apostles, and particularly its runic signature which brings Donoghue onto the Cynewulfian poems and concepts of authorship. Ælfric’s Lives of Saints and especially his Life of Saint Edmund introduces the reader to that author’s prose style and his use of miracles, though the issues of autonomy and gender that his Life of Æthelthryth invokes are ignored. The chapter finishes with a good account of The Dream of the Rood. Donoghue’s fourth chapter on ‘The Pulpit’ is shorter and, after discussing the homiletic aspects of The Seafarer and Vercelli Homily X, to which he also compares The Wanderer, the main body treats Ælfric and Wulfstan’s homilies at length, covering the former’s anxiety over translations of scripture into the vernacular as potentially leading to unsound interpretations by the laity, and the two authors’ invocation of the Last Days. There is a good discussion of Ælfric’s shifting attitude to the Viking invasions (93) and Wulfstan’s denunciation of the invaders followed by his collaboration with Cnut (99), with a useful account of Wulfstan’s homiletic style and morally reforming lawcodes (96, 98-9). The final chapter on ‘The Scholar’ starts with Bede’s place in Dante’s canon of great theologians, and, after a discussion of the Latin and English versions of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History and Alfred’s education and literacy reforms, Donoghue twice further uses Dante to move onto an account of the Alfredian translation of Boethius and the other works it is “most necessary to know” like Orosius’ Adversus Paganos (106, 110). The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Apollonius of Tyre generally get short shrift in books of this sort, and so the attention given to them here is welcome. Analyses of a few riddles follow and are put in the context of the verbal construction of reality (123), and the chapter ends by emphasising Ælfric and Alfred’s importance to Old English scholarship. There is a section of ‘Notes’, comprising mainly further bibliographical references, of which another (partially overlapping) set is given immediately afterwards as ‘Further Reading’; and the book is provided with an index.

This book will clearly work best read alongside a course reader, motivating students to dig deeper into their set texts and to venture further afield into less well-known territory. Donoghue’s close readings of both key passages and less-cited ones are insightful and stimulating. However, they are sometimes highly disputable (10, 11, 51), although Donoghue does usually give some indication of scholarly disagreement (50, 81). Given this, the book very much presents one (learned and perceptive) scholar’s overview of Old English literature, and it will not supersede Greenfield and Calder or the Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature for undergraduates beyond the introductory stage. Nevertheless, throughout the book Donoghue displays an admirable attention to the needs of his intended audience and
knowledge of what they will find unfamiliar or misleading (4, 6, 15, 34, 103, 106). However, certain comments seem likely to date swiftly (24; Vin Diesel and Arnold Schwarzenegger may seem an unlikely pairing to a future generation which may know the latter primarily for his political career – think of Ronald Reagan). In fewer than 150 pages, Donoghue manages, alongside an overview of all the texts an undergraduate is likely to come across, to cover such central concepts as heroism, kingship, transience, paganism and Christianity, orality and literacy with good sense and clarity, (although he initially slightly over-emphasises the importance of the oral (2-4), where later he describes more accurately an oral-literate mix (52).) One might look for a little attention to the applicability of modern literary theories to Old English texts, particularly a nod to the important work that has been done in gender studies and postcolonialism. Euphrosyne’s saintly transvestism, for instance, is deemed “unusual”, but its implications for gender and sexuality in the text remain unexplored (72; cf. 25), and in general the book avoids these issues (41, 70).

Donoghue’s opening pages invoke Bede’s Cædmon, King Alfred’s educative programme, and Ælfric’s pedagogical writings (ix-x). He returns to all three throughout the book but particularly in his final chapter on ‘The Scholar’, where it becomes clear that the models for his own work have been Bede’s diligent study and Alfred and Ælfric’s concern with teaching the young. Daniel Donoghue is clearly an experienced and inspiring teacher. This is made evident by the focus and vision of the scholarship in this book, which is sure to find a place on every introductory reading list.

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Finn E Sinclair, Milk and Blood: Gender and Genealogy in the ‘Chanson de geste’ (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 292 pp. ISBN 3-906759-73-9

This is a wide-ranging study looking at texts from the much studied, for example, Raoul de Cambrai to the largely neglected, for example Daurel et Beton, within a framework of feminist and psychoanalytical theory. The introduction sets this study within the context of the growing interest in gender, and particularly the feminine, in medieval studies; Sinclair also uses the introduction to defend her theoretical approach.

Chapter One sets out the theoretical framework for the study, a framework which avoids the anachronistic, placing as much emphasis on medieval theology as on modern psychoanalysis. The historical contextualization continues in the next chapter with a robust critique of both R. Howard Blochs’ patrilinear and agnatic model of kinship bonds and Heintze’s model of the cognatic. The issue of inheritance finally leads to textual analysis of the two versions of the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne and Berte as grans piés, the first synthesising folk-tale and epic, the second illustrating a dialogical relationship between epic and religious discourse, both dealing with mother as matriarch, the ancestor of an epic lineage. The textual analysis is expressed with far more clarity than is the theoretical material in the introduction. Chapter three examines the subversive woman, the other medieval stereotype. Again Berte as grans piés and the Chevalier au Cygne are significant texts in this analysis; in both texts the grandmother threatens the continuation of the lineage. It is the analysis of Ami and Amile which is most sensitive in this chapter, pointing out the complexity of relationships and characterisation; here we are presented with woman as wife as much as woman as mother, though maternal roles are also relevant.

It is with the analysis of Raoul de Cambrai in chapters 4 and 5 that we reach the meat of the study. This complex text is ideal material for Sinclair’s approach. She begins with the demolition of simplistic readings of the female role which is followed by a sound analysis of the voice of Aalais. Marsent is seen more in terms of what Raoul and Bernier say about her; Beatrice, too often ignored in discussions of this text, is described as ‘refiguring’ ‘the motifs of woman as critical voice, reproductive body and prophesying other’ (p. 197). The role of woman as ‘critical voice’ is important in many chansons de geste; Sinclair is concentrating on the maternal voice but this is perhaps the aspect of her study which can most fruitfully be extended by other scholars to other texts. This is also clearly linked to the final aspect of Sinclair’s study, the paternal crisis, seen not only in Raoul but also in Aye d’Avignon, the under-studied Parise la Duchesse, and Daurel et Beton. The absence or inadequacy of the father is an important feature in all these texts and Sinclair analyses lucidly the ambiguities in the presentation of both the paternal and the maternal. The author reminds her readers of the salient elements of the less well-known narratives so there is no danger of losing the thread. Translations accompany all quotations in Old French; these are either taken from published texts (Kay’s edition of Raoul de Cambrai) or are provided by Sinclair herself. This is a valuable addition to the study of gender roles in the chanson de geste, building on the important work in this area carried out by Sarah Kay. It is only to be hoped that the lengthy theoretical beginning does not deter readers from following through to the substantial and sensitive readings of the texts.

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This book is a collection of thirteen essays written in honour of Bruce Mitchell, arguably the most influential scholar of Old English in modern times, by some of his past students, colleagues and friends. On initial viewing the essays appear to cover the complete spectrum of contemporary study of Old English language and literature: contributions by Irvine, Bammesberger and Kubouchi form a group focused on particular authors or individual poems; a second group is concerned with aspects of transmission and reception of the texts with regards to linguistic processes and problems of meaning and definition; and the third deals with the stylistic qualities of the language. Indeed, an underlying theme of this collection can be taken as the relationship between translations into Old English and their Latin originals; and essays such as those by Rissanen and Hiltunen make use of modern computer-database technology to improve the reliability of their linguistic data, providing a twenty-first-century approach to scholarship in this field.

Kubouchi raises the important issue that written texts were also presented orally, and uses the example of texts by Archbishop Wulfstan to highlight how they were composed with differing oral audiences in mind. This link between the oral and written text is often overlooked by scholars and Kubouchi’s essay valuably centres on the issues of recording and reconstructing oral traditions.

Muir’s essay deals with the transmission and reception of vernacular poetry. He investigates the effect that scribal alterations have had on the original material and attempts to show the competency, or inadequacy, of the scribes at different periods in
history. Muir’s essay is a cautionary tale for modern editors of vernacular texts; he commends the slow process of reconstruction of original or near original materials, despite the technical difficulties this raises.

Lapidge’s study of the artistic effect caused by moving prepositions which precede noun phrases in Old English poetry leads him to question whether the practice was taken from Latin models or from earlier Old English poetry. Stylistic features are also tackled by Rissanen, who traces the influence of Latin on the Old English idiom ‘to wit’. In a thought-provoking contribution, Robinson follows linguistic-stylistic features which he also finds in Finnish literature of the time (a comparison not previously made).

This collection is of a high scholarly standard; indeed, although its editor claims that it is written in a straightforward style, its language is challenging for a novice or an undergraduate. However, for those wanting an overview of current work in the field of Old English writing and textual studies, this collection gives a thorough grounding and is a fitting celebration of Mitchell’s career.

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