

Reviews

Article

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C. Benoît, Les Etangs de la Dombes au moyen âge, XIIIe-XVe siècles. Paris, Editions du Comité des Travaux historiques et scientifiques (CTHS), 1992, 102 pp. 150f.

Le Terrier Avignonnais de l'évêque Grimoard (1366-1368), edited by Anne-Marie Hayez. Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, section d'histoire médiévale et de philologie, vol. 21. Paris, CTHS, 1993, li +413 pp. 400f.

Les Pays de la Loire Moyenne dans le Trésor des Chartes. Berry, Blésois, Chartrain, Orléanais, Touraine, 1350-1502, edited by Bernard Chevalier. Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, section d'histoire médiévale et de philologie, vol. 22. Paris, CTHS. 1993. ix + 644 pp. 400f.

From its inception in 1834 the CTHS has made, and continues to make, a major contribution to the study of medieval France. Now under the auspices of the Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Culture, it publishes not only monographs such as that of C. Benoît but also, and perhaps more significantly in terms of the furtherance and facilitation of research, editions and calendars of important texts. The works under review provide typical examples of its breadth of activity and high publication standards as well as demonstrating the careful and thorough treatment of archival sources which remains a hallmark of French medieval scholarship.

Benoît's 'ethno-historical' study concerns the creation and organisation of *étangs* in the area between Mâcon and Lyon. These ponds were used, when water-filled, for fish-farming, and when drained (as they were deliberately from time to time), for agriculture. Their development can be related to the expansion of cultivation in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but this study reminds us that they persisted in use to the Revolution when, in common with other wetlands, their permanent drainage was ordered in an attempt to increase

national grain production. By nature of the topic and evidence, this is a fairly esoteric study, but it touches on a wide range of aspects - methods of constructing and maintaining artificial ponds, styles of fishing and variety of species, communal and seigneurial regulation of resources - so that it has a value beyond that of local interest. Not least it provides a useful glossary of technical terms found in the account rolls which embraces Latin as well as Franco-Provençal vocabulary. As Benoît points out, there has been a lack of attention paid to features such as *étangs*; even this short study helps to show the variety and initiative of medieval farming systems and the care with which they were administered.

This high level of administrative activity, reminding us that medieval people were neither devoid of business acumen nor unaware of the manifold values of efficiency, is also revealed in Hayez' edition of the bishop of Avignon's *terrier*. Indeed this document is the direct result of a fact-finding exercise masterminded by the bishop's receiver, Sicard de Fraisse, undertaken to restore seigneurial authority, and hence income, after a period of neglect. The *terrier* details 520 tenures, 65% of which lay within the city of Avignon, the remainder within a 10 km radius of the city. It is helpful for a study of urban topography, not least because it follows a geographical order and describes each tenement in relation to neighbouring plots, streets and other features. By glossing the text with references to accounts and other documents produced by Sicard during his reforming activities Hayez is able to show a medieval administrator in full flight, as well as revealing how he coped with changing circumstances in the wake of the plagues of 1348-49 and 1361. The to-be-expected amalgamation of tenements, attempts to find new occupiers, reduction of rents to encourage cultivation are all visible, but the document also echoes reactionary tendencies found elsewhere on great estates in this period. If Sicard found defaults or underestimations of rents, or seigneurial rights untapped, he was quick to remedy the situation in his lord's favour, and was thus able to conclude his *terrier* with considerable pride in that he had managed to increase cash income almost four-fold and to collect all the rents in kind which had fallen into abeyance, right down to six live chickens and a loaf of bread worth 2 deniers (pp.xxiv, 289-92). As Hayez indicates, there is much potential for further research on this material, and a glance through the text confirms her remark. For instance, the number of

female landholders is striking and may echo a trend noted elsewhere of the enhanced role of heiresses in the post-plague period.

The third CTHS publication under review is another mine of potential information. The value of the *Trésor des Chartes*, roughly the equivalent of all the English chancery enrolments put together, has long been realised. For the period to 1350 full national calendars have been produced by the Archives Nationales. The CTHS has already printed two calendars which extract and regroup the material on a regional basis (*Gascogne*, 1966, and *Languedoc et Rouergue*, 1983). This volume, covering the important area of mid-Loire, the heartlands of the Orléanists and subsequently of Charles VII as *roi de Bourges*, follows the same format as its two predecessors, summarising, in order of their appearance in the *Trésor* registers (AN JJ), the entries relevant to the area under scrutiny. A total of 5,087 acts are listed, many more than for the other two areas and yet (in the light of the AN calendars to 1350) covering a shorter time span. Within the period 1350-1502, the distribution is somewhat uneven, with approximately 1,900 for the years 1350-1400 and 2,300 for 1450-1502 but only c.900 for the intervening half century, testimony to the dislocating impact of civil war and English occupation, an aspect directly revealed by acts issued under the auspices of the duke of Bedford as Regent of France.

There is no full introduction to this volume. To analyse the calendar would be an enormous task and, besides, the entries are but a bald summary of the full texts in the *Trésor*. The value of the *Trésor* material is already well known, most particularly for the study of crime, for the registers contain a substantial number of remissions (or pardons) where circumstantial detail is provided in helpfully lengthy fashion (see Curry, *ante*, XIV, and Evans, *ante*, XVIII, where the entries for Lancastrian Normandy are discussed in this context). Even the short summaries in this mid-Loire calendar provide a tempting taster, with cases such as that of the tailor (with bad aim?) who accidentally stabbed his child with a pair of scissors when it was really his adulterous wife he was trying to kill (item 66, 1352), or that of an uncle who murdered his niece when she failed to have his meal ready on time (item 3,914, 1484), or that of a dispute in a *jeu de paume* which ended in one opponent killing the other (item 3,916, 1484). Several cast light upon the impact of the Anglo-French war, revealing, for instance, the parlous financial state of a Crécy war widow,

and the rape, murder and pillage committed, it seems, as much by those defending Valois France as those attacking her. Others concern urban and market privileges, letters of ennoblement and legitimisation, and royal business in general. Any guide to such fascinating and wide-ranging material is valuable. This volume, in common with all CTHS productions, is beautifully presented and comprehensively indexed. Further volumes are eagerly anticipated.

Anne Curry
University of Reading

Fred. C. Robinson, The Tomb of Beowulf and Other Essays on Old English. Oxford, UK and Cambridge Ma: Blackwell. x + 335 pp

This volume of essays critical and contextual is intended to form a diptych with a second devoted exclusively to textual matters. We are able here to see a distinctive mind at work on a wide variety of approaches to Old English literature, from the interpretation of particular words and names to a wry glance at the way in which the twentieth century appears to think of medievalists and the medieval. As well as essays selected from almost thirty years of scholarship, there are three new pieces: the title essay, 'The Tomb of Beowulf' itself; 'Ezra Pound and the Old English Translational Tradition'; 'The Afterlife of Old English: A Brief History of Composition in Old English after the Close of the Anglo-Saxon Period'. The book is in five sections, two on literary interpretation (first *Beowulf* then other texts, notably *Maldon*, *Exodus*, and the 'Moth' riddle), and one each on onomastics, women, and 'Old English in the Twentieth Century'. Several of the previously printed items are updated by additional footnotes and sometimes tart 'afterwords', recording recent work or defending a position.

The 'Tomb' essay is concerned with the second of the strange funeral ceremonies with which *Beowulf* ends, and sees in the 'ceremony around the walled monument' not a poet confused about pagan rites, but a deliberately constructed act of deification carried out by unhappily misguided heathens (as the Christian poet and his audience

saw them) - something like idol-worshipping Danes in the Grendel crisis. Robinson surveys a wide range of herotheism and euhemerism from Classical, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon sources (finding far more among the last than one might have suspected, in *Wulfstan*, *Ælfric*, Alfred and the genealogies), to argue convincingly that the poem's audience was in principle prepared for 'an understanding of the closing ritual as a dark Germanic apotheosis' and 'a powerful culmination of the perverse tension throughout the poem between inspiring heroism and the sad shame of heathenism'.

That new piece continues and extends a view of *Beowulf* exemplified and generalised in the rest of the section, as a heroic poem with a human hero, not a 'romantic fable' of 'conflict between good monsters and bad monsters'. The familiar essay demolishing 'elements of the marvellous' in *Beowulf*'s characterisation concludes with an afterword defending Robinson's position against Niles and Greenfield. The other two *Beowulf* items are of a broader character. That on 'The Background Necessary for Teaching *Beowulf*' comes originally from a book on the teaching of the poem in the very specific context of American universities (normally in translation, and often by non-specialist instructors with very little class time). The British reader might well wonder about the identity of the intended audience, but this admirably succinct and fair-minded survey could prove very useful to students beginning a study of the poem. The remaining 'Introduction to *Beowulf*' is broader still in its appeal, having been designed to accompany Marijane Osborn's translation, but it manages to convey in a brief space a sharp sense both of the poem's language and its context. Pieces like this, together with the direct, unfussy accessibility of even the most scholarly items, testify to Robinson's keen interest in all methods of keeping the Anglo-Saxon and present worlds in touch, and especially in translation.

The unique insight offered by the *Yale Review* paper on Pound's *Seafarer* translation, is matched by the new explorations of modern translation and composition in Anglo-Saxon. The section on women is appropriately rewarding, as we are asked to think not only about Wigelin(e), perhaps the mother of one of the heroes of Maldon, but also of the strong likelihood that we are hearing women's voices speaking to us from many an anonymous Old English text.

If there is a typical item in this varied and inviting collection, it is the 1982 discussion of a dictum from the strangest of texts for the modern reader known as *Maxims II*, where we have to decide what

the poet wants us to think of truth itself: is it tricky or evident? The puzzle leads Robinson into a witty exploration not only of what an Anglo-Saxon person would be most likely to say, but also of what contending bands of scholars over the past hundred years would prefer him, or her, to have said.

David J. Williams
University of Reading

Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales*. London and New York: Routledge. 1985 reprinted 1993. xii + 380 pp.

The lively sense of personal engagement informing Derek Pearsall's study of the *Canterbury Tales* can be appropriately exemplified by his frankly expressed bewildered amazement at the triumphant and 'characteristic' success Chaucer makes of the General Prologue in the face of all odds. When the poet alarmingly proposes to hold up proceedings by describing each of the newly met pilgrims, 'it seems like a recipe for certain disaster, for repetitive schematisation and yawning monotony, something that a deranged *rhétoriqueur* might have dreamed up'.

The combination of intimate response and witty precision characterises the whole book. Beginning from the modestly urged premise that more attention should be paid to individual tales than to putative reconstructions of unity and coherence in the collection, Pearsall offers an account that nevertheless manages to consider and balance the claims of both approaches. More generally it is remarkable how strong a sense the reader has throughout of the contribution of other critics to an understanding of the *Tales*, without diverting attention from Pearsall's constant concern with the processes of Chaucer's imagination. The continuous interweaving of criticism of the text with criticism of criticism means that throughout the book we have the sense of a community of readers, past and present, engaging with Chaucer and with each other. Still Pearsall's own voice is unmistakable among them, not hesitating to rebuke sternly some whose concentration on the task in hand may have wavered. Considering the schematic and thematic approaches of Leyerle, Howard and others, Pearsall says,

'This game of free associations is an activity not of the critically alert mind striving to participate with Chaucer in his imaginative engagement with his matter, but of the mind idling among its reminiscences of the *Tales*.' Although always ready to credit a 'rich and stimulating view' (here that of Alfred David), he consistently rejects the rigidly systematic because that is what Chaucer has done: 'it seems that he has deliberately set out to create a form which will deny systematic interpretation'. His own sceptical account of the plan and order of the *Tales* is a finely tuned dialectic, balancing, on the one hand, a genuine appreciation of the excitement we feel at 'the naturalistic surge' or Chaucer's style, at the 'dramatic momentum' and thematic and structural suggestiveness of the pilgrimage frame, with, on the other hand, an insistence on recognising that suggestion opens rather than closes possibilities.

Contending that 'the design of the work is nothing more than a means of granting to individual tales the greatest possible degree of autonomy', the bulk of Pearsall's book is appropriately devoted to criticism of particular tales and portraits. It is arranged in a way that encourages random dipping, and rewards it with succinct and penetrating readings. There is, for instance, the reader's humorously recorded internal struggle over the imperfect Squire's Tale, where the 'dramatic ironical' approach, firmly put in its place earlier, makes a fighting comeback in the interests of protecting Chaucer from the charge of nodding; or the sympathetic questioning of the so-called 'Religious Tales', where the spectre of ironic appropriation (seeing such tales as 'ironically flawed accounts of what they were hitherto thought to be accounts of') somehow refuses to be exorcised.

It is a pity that the welcome reprinting of this, one of the best books on Chaucer, was not taken as an opportunity to improve the design of the volume. The generous invitation Pearsall offers his readers to the world of Chaucer criticism is obstructed by the absence of running page numbers to key the notes to the main text, and by the fussy sub-division of secondary works in the bibliography, where a single alphabetical list would be easier to use.

David J. Williams
University of Reading

Medieval Political Theory - A Reader: the Quest for the Body Politic 1100-1400, edited by Cary J. Nederman and Kate Langdon Forhan. Routledge, London and New York, 1993.

The aim of the editors of this book is 'to disseminate to a non-specialist audience a representative sampling of the political ideas and arguments which theorists of the Middle Ages bequeathed to the West'. The publishers think that students of political theory will value it as an introductory course exposing them 'directly to the texts, without enmeshing them in complexities'. Both editors and publishers are likely to be disappointed. In 200 pages there are extracts from fifteen authors with five taking three-quarters of the space: John of Salisbury, Aquinas, Brunetto Latini, Marsilio and Christine de Pisan. The material is arranged in three sections, five authors for the twelfth, three for the thirteenth and seven for the fourteenth century. Each section is provided with a list of further reading but no general view of the development of either political theory or political society. The general introduction gives a sketch of what happened to political thought between the ancient Greeks and the Investiture Controversy. Students and non-students are then left to make what they can of the texts, with only some brief notes on the authors selected to help them.

Some of the texts are anyway difficult to understand, so it is indispensable that the translation itself should make sense. Some passages from Marsilio, Ockham and Wyclif are baffling. Since Gewirth managed to tease out the meaning of Marsilio and produce a creditably elegant version, that version could have at least been consulted. The Aquinas passages (a quarter of the whole text) will certainly daunt a student who knows nothing more of scholastic modes of procedure than the single sentence devoted to it on page 99. A phrase translated literally, Marsilio 'son of Antenor' should surely have been rendered as 'the Paduan', as the editors must have known, since Previté-Orton explained this in the Latin text they used as their source. Latini's good magistrate is described as one who 'fears God, speaks well, ... is not proud, nor wrathful, nor fearful, speaks two languages', making nonsense of the phrase 'ne ij langages', where 'two-faced' seems to be meant. When Christine de Pisan quoted Justin on Pythagoras's home-city of Methapontus in Puilla, her contemporaries may have understood where she meant. Modern readers of English will probably

need to be alerted to the fact that Metaponto is in south Italy and might have appreciated a note on Justin as a Roman historian, even if they know about Pythagoras. There are no footnotes or other annotation.

Four of the five principal authors here were of Italian origin and a clearer view of medieval political thinking might have been provided by some closer attention to the peculiar difficulties of political organisation in medieval Italy. It had no native monarchy of its own, it had a glorious imperial past, a residual Roman authority in the papacy and a tradition of quasi-independent city-states all at variance with one another and as promising a subject for political speculation as Aristotle had found the ancient cities of Greece. Dante's grandiose argument for the universal state is represented here by four pages from the vernacular *Convivio*, rather than from *De Monarchia*. Latini's account from his vernacular (French) encyclopaedia of the way the podesta exercised office in the Italian city-state of the thirteenth century is not theoretical, but merely descriptive. Nor does Christine de Pisan's view of rulership, translated from the French, have any theoretical interest. It is systematically based on the opinion that the political entity is analogous to the human body, with head, belly, legs and arms, illustrated by reference to ancient writers, particularly Valerius Maximus. Its merits are only literary, though it serves here, along with three verses from Marie de France's *Fable of the Belly* to justify the claim that even women thought about politics in the Middle Ages. This point, which has little to do with political thought as such, could much more clearly have been established by reference to the careers of any number of medieval women who were active as rulers.

This collection of texts was not designed for historians, though they are likely to be some of its most attentive readers, since a few of the passages appear here in English for the first time. But historians of Henry II's government or indeed of the twelfth-century papacy will not find anything in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* to suggest he really understood the significance of what was happening politically in either state or church in his own day. Medieval political theorists, even when they were employed as pamphleteers, cannot be shown to have exercised any real influence on politicians or subjects and did not pay close attention to the activities of their own governments. The main thrust of their thinking was not focused on political problems and their ideas about politics were derived either from

ancient writers whom they admired for other reasons or from their confidence in what they could prove by logic. Fortunately few contemporaries were persuaded in those days to pay much attention to political theorists.

Donald Matthew
University of Reading

Anthony Kenny, Aquinas on Mind. London and New York, Routledge, 1993 (paperback, 1994), 182 pp.

This is that highly desirable rarity, a short book by a scholar who has been working on its subject for a long time and from a number of different angles of approach, who now distils his reflections in an elegant account of what have come to seem to him the essentials. The first chapter is an *apologia* for the study of Aquinas. This is cast in terms of an exploration of the relation of philosophy to the disciplines with which it interacts, forming and being formed age by age. The essay forms a classic study of the issues whether there is 'progress in philosophy' and what is its relationship with science. Upon that rests the case made here for studying the mediaeval material in its own philosophical right and not merely as of historical interest.

The bulk of the book is a close study of the section of the *Summa Theologiae* which, Kenny suggests, 'contains the most mature and comprehensive presentation of his philosophical psychology'. Throughout the discussion he tests Aquinas against modern preoccupations and judges him by his own philosophical priorities. For example, the mind-brain question is not much in mediaeval terms - *cerebrum* is a relatively uncommon term amongst the mass of terminology concerned with mind and ratiocination and imagination. But it is given a fair run here, in a wholly unforced manner. This is the right way to 'bring up to date' the study of a mediaeval thinker. That said, it is also true that the areas of discourse which come naturally in the discussion are dictated by the mediaeval Christian adjustments of the preoccupations of late antique philosophy: mind and metaphysics; perception and imagination; the nature of the intellect; appetite and will; the freedom of the will; sense, imagination and intellect; univer-

sals; particulars; self-knowledge; the nature of the soul; mind and body. There is certainly plenty to be said on these matters, but it would have been interesting to have something on error and curiosity and the ways in which knowing can go wrong in the view of thinkers with Aquinas' working assumptions.

The book is as well-written, as readable, as engaging, as provocative and penetrating as one would expect from its author. There is a useful index, which would have been more useful still if longer, and if it had included a larger number of the Latin technical terms. The Latin of the quotations is given in the notes, so there would have been every justification for such an additional index, and that would have added to the book's convenience for scholars.

G.R. Evans
University of Cambridge

John Peddie: The Roman War Machine, Alan Sutton,
Dover 1994

This book falls into a genre of historical writing about the armies of the ancient world. Written by an ex-soldier, it consistently makes comparisons between reported ancient military events and twentieth-century military situations. Underpinning the work is an assumption that the soldier ancient or modern thought and acted in the same rational manner (p.xi). Predictably, the comparisons are made between the successful generals of the Roman world and those of the British army (e.g. Slim in Burma). The author only deals with success - no account is given of Rome's failures in battle in the later empire. Furthermore he is dependent upon literary sources from mainly the late first century BC and the first century AD and, thus, misses the main phase of Roman expansion in the second century BC.

Peddie is at his most innovative when discussing the questions of supply and logistics. By using the Ministry of Defence's figures for 'Common Engineering Tasks', he calculates the man hours involved in building a marching camp (pp.77-78). Further, his quantitative work produces an array of statistics for the army on the march: Caesar's 8 legions in Gaul with their baggage animals (45,000 men and 16,000

animals) would form a column twenty two and a half miles long moving at 3 miles an hour (p.74). The animals alone would have required 1800 acres of pasture per day. The army drawn up for battle would fill a space 5.68 miles long. Figures such as these provide for a greater understanding of the Roman war machine.

Some topics are simply beyond Peddie's grasp. In his discussion of generalship, he assumes continuity in military thinking from the first century AD to the present (p.19), and yet sees the Roman system of selecting their generals as alien to the modern mind (p.18). He asserts that the Roman general had no training in warfare and was destined by wealth and birth to command: 'The Romans had no military training institutions and no formal process of either testing or educating officers in staff duties and the problems of command' (p.4). In doing so, he ignores and belittles the military service of the male elite as military tribunes (p.29 'short term *politicos*', described by Montgomery as 'military nonsense'). This office provided the training for command later as praetor and consul in the republic.

Overall the book is limited by the perspective of the author and the source material utilised. No reference is made to any epigraphic evidence or to the wealth of contemporary documentation from Egypt and Britain, such as the Vindolanda Writing Tablets (see now A.K. Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Frontier: Vindolanda and Its People*, London 1994 or A.K. Bowman & D.J. Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing Tablets*, London 1994). The book celebrates military success in isolation from the social system that produced it - this might be of interest to the modern general but, for the historian or archaeologist, there is little of value in this approach.

Ray Laurence
University of Reading

A.J. Pollard, Richard III and the Princes in the Tower.
Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud 1993. ISBN 0-86299-990-1 (paperback) £12.99

This is the paperback edition of a book originally published in 1991 and is to be welcomed in its new form which should be more accessible

to students and the general public. Professor Pollard gives a complete and detailed account of Richard's life and the many controversies surrounding it. At the same time he gives a masterly study of both the legends which have grown up round Richard, the Tudor propaganda which made him the blackest monarch ever to sit on the throne of England and the reaction which turned him into a generous, loyal and noble near-saint. Surveying the contemporary evidence as dispassionately as he can, Pollard comes to the conclusion that Richard probably did murder his nephews. Even if he did not, too many of his contemporaries thought that he did and this idea turned them against him. Pollard brings out clearly the extent to which Richard was a man of the north and how he never really succeeded in winning over the south. He suggests that he was an extremely complex man capable of wholly different standards in public and private life as evidenced on the one hand by his generous gifts to northern churches and chapels and on the other by his ruthless treatment of his mother-in-law, the Countess of Warwick, and the Countess of Oxford. His conclusion is that Richard was primarily an opportunist with no deep plan except to survive. Brilliant in the short term his lack of a longer-term plan was his undoing once he had come to the throne. Pollard speculates convincingly that he found the strain too much for him and cites as evidence the plan to marry Elizabeth of York after the death of Queen Anne. His treatment of Anne also shocked at least some of his contemporaries. He should have won the Battle of Bosworth. He could have gathered his troops earlier for it seems clear that some of the men most loyal to him failed to reach the battle in time, but even so it was his own impetuosity which was probably his undoing. Pollard frankly admits that he is somewhat hostile to Richard, but he gives good reason for his attitude, and this is as balanced a view as one is likely to find. The book is lavishly and beautifully illustrated, and the captions are unusually informative. There are excellent suggestions for further reading. There are only two small criticisms. Pollard sometimes confuses 'may' and 'might', and on p.160 Anne of Beaujeu was not the aunt of Charles VIII but his sister.

Peter Noble
University of Reading

Christian de Mérindol, Les fêtes de chevalerie à la cour du roi René. Emblématique, art et histoire (les joutes de Nancy, le Pas de Saumur et le Pas de Tarascon), Mémoires et documents d'histoire médiévale et de philologie, 6, Paris, CTHS, 1993; ISBN 2-7335-0265-1 193 pp. inc. 10 col. pls & 37 b/w illus.

The most spectacular of René of Anjou's tournaments was that at Nancy in 1445 to celebrate the proxy marriage of his daughter, Margaret, to Henry VI. The two sides were led by Charles VII and René himself and included contenders from France, Lorraine and the Low Countries. The contemporary *Histoire de Gaston IV de Foix*, the chief combatant for Charles VII, preserves a blow-by-blow account which carefully details all the elaborate accoutrements. The *Pas de Saumur* in 1446 was a less international affair but still an occasion for lavish display. It was minutely recorded in writing and in images, preserved in a manuscript in St Petersburg which looks to date from at least ten to fifteen years after the event. Although this manuscript is crucial to the re-creation of the *Pas* and important for understanding badges and crests employed elsewhere, its likely date is not explored, perhaps because it could only be consulted on microfilm. Unfortunately, the microfilm also appears to be the source of the reproductions, seriously impairing their legibility and usefulness. The *Pas de Tarascon* of 1449 was the most modest but the one closest to pageant or drama in its consistent presentation of the two 'shepherd' defenders. The account by one of the challengers, Louis de Beauvau, received only one illustration representing the 'shepherdess' in whose honour they fought, the theme of the *pas* rather than any of its events. Much of the book is devoted to a detailed heraldic catalogue of the participants in the three tournaments, supplemented by information from other documented occasions for armorial and emblematic display: the *Pas de Châlons*, which followed Nancy, the jousts at Tours in 1447 and Charles VII's triumphal Entry to Rouen in 1449. René's own account of the ideal tournament, the *Livre des tournois*, is occasionally introduced. Biographical information is restricted to essentials; the amount of genealogical information varies for reasons which are not always apparent; heraldic information includes all the constituents of formal heraldry, personal devices and livery as well as the

more ephemeral emblems which might be adopted for the lists. Illustrations from the *Pas de Saumur* manuscript are supplemented by seals and other representations of coats of arms, including ten handsome colour plates from the armorial of René's Order of the Crescent founded in 1448. Dimensions are given for none of the illustrations and titles are sometimes restricted to the heraldry without indicating what is being reproduced.

The opening sections discuss the possible reasons underlying the selection of badges and colours: relationships to personal heraldry, canting references to names, allusions to family history, evocations of the heroes of romance, political statements of alliance or opposition. Inevitably, much has to remain hypothetical since chroniclers seldom record the motivation behind particular choices. At Nancy, for instance, René used the arms of Jerusalem: was he deliberately invoking Godefroy de Bouillon as the author suggests? Was he simply using the most prestigious of his arms, anxious to assert his own regal status as his daughter married the King of England but reluctant to recall his expulsion from the Kingdom of Naples? Interesting possibilities are raised in the ingenious search for explanations but arguments have perhaps suffered from over-compression and from over-optimism in assessing likely readers' familiarity with material and ideas contained in the other works cited in footnotes.

The title promises rather more than the book contains: despite the detail on the blazons and badges of individual participants, other literature must still be consulted for information on the sequence of events at the jousts, their general nature and the situations from which they arose. Obviously, anyone pursuing the heraldry of René's associates and rivals will find the book invaluable. It also forms a useful reminder that the tournament was being exploited as a means of communication long before dwindling military usefulness focused attention on its other functions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Catherine Reynolds
London

Roberta Gilchrist, Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, xiv + 222 pp; £35.00 ISBN 0-415-08903-4.

It is not often that a work of 'feminist archaeology' crosses the desk, and so I approached this book with particular interest. In fact, as Gilchrist notes, any archaeology of nunneries has had a much lower profile than research into monasteries, not entirely because there are fewer sites yielding poorer remains. Archaeologists have tended to assume male patterns were the norm, and to judge religious foundations for women by male standards and find them wanting. This book's point is to show that nunneries were pursuing a rather different agenda from men's houses, so that they should be considered in their own terms.

Quite right. We need not assume that the relative poverty of women's houses means that they were unsuccessful foundations, badly endowed and ineffectively run. Their material remains may well reflect a different attitude towards religious life, emphasising simplicity and humility, even when popular support brought in more money. Or it may be that nuns made the best of a bad job, tailoring their theology of monasticism to the cloth of their cash-flow. This approach does not mean we cannot compare the lives of monks and nuns, but we would do so with the better knowledge of the preferences of each, rather than beginning with one as a poor relation -literally -of the other. In all this, Gilchrist's agenda is right, and a book highlighting religious women's archaeology is to be welcomed.

That said, my reservations may well be seen as carping, for I felt a sledgehammer had been taken to crack a nut. Gilchrist begins with an insistence on theory, especially post-processualism, written in a style that will daunt many: they may not get past the first chapter. I am an intellectual historian and all for theory, but I am dismayed by:

Group membership and segregation were signalled by a spatial matrix which constructed meaning through the location and content of images. (p.160)

to mean, 'The placement of pictures and sculpture was not random'. Gilchrist will want to reply that her point is stronger: that, for

instance, secular male images could only be placed in secular male areas of the nunnery. But it is precisely here that she seems to be wearing her own gender spectacles. If we use our modern, narrow vision of what is 'suitable' to religion, what are we to make of the Kilpeck sculptures or of marginal vulgarity in Books of Hours? Gender segregation may be 'an expression of male status', but it may also be a female choice for freedom. Gilchrist may well agree with this, but the writing did not leave me entirely clear.

The book wants to draw a wider audience for archaeological evidence, which aim must be applauded, and a very full bibliography allows the reader to follow up references that have whetted her appetite. It could only be to the good if the 'handmaid of history' were a more integral part of more historians' lives.

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Roman Epic, edited by A.J. Boyle, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, 336 pp.

This book contains essays on individual Roman epics, as one might expect, but ends with two contributions on medieval and Renaissance Latin epics, which are felt to be continuations of the Roman through the influence of Virgil. Only one contributor, J.O. Ward, is not a practising Classicist (he is a historian) and he was chosen to write about Medieval Latin epic. It is his essay that will be commented on here since it falls more readily into the purview of this Journal.

While deciding, quite legitimately, to focus on the *Waltharius* with an excursus on Hrotsvit's *Gesta Ottonis*, Ward starts with an overview, which is somewhat misleading, even if one makes proper allowance for shortage of space. It is here that the non-specialisation of the author is felt, for Virgil is presented as some sort of 'only-begetter' of Medieval Latin epic. No mention is made of Lucan who was as widely read as Virgil if not more so, and Lucan's mediation of Virgilian *données*, to present an anti-Roman view, is therefore missing in any discussion of what was Roman in Medieval Latin epics. Paradoxically Ward the historian treats the texts as some timeless

homogeneous group when they are significantly distinct; the twelfth-century epics have little of the so-called Roman characteristic and differ in their aims and subjects, with grosso modo the philosophical-type epics being associated with Chartres and the historical with Reims.

However, the greater part of Ward's article is devoted to the *Waltharius* and while one cannot fault his presentation of the literary and historical data, one is left with an uneasy feeling. He has learned some literary criticism from Boyle in particular, but does not appear to be able to judge tone. Granted some of the 'anonymous' author's uses of Virgilian quotes are serious and telling, but the fact that he describes Attila's hangover and consequent bilious attack in phrases Virgil uses for Dido's tragic 'jilted lover' condition cannot be brushed aside with bland disclaimers that we cannot judge what the contemporary audience's literary appreciation was like. Either the author is poking fun or he does not know how to use quotes - and Ward has demonstrated that he really does know how to use them and their resonances! Furthermore, the desire to fit the epic into a Roman (i.e. secular), Virgilian context makes him give far too much weight to the dynastic elements and the importance of the female, causing him to reject Kratz's Christian thesis to such an extent that he even passes over in silence the obvious Biblical reference in the wounds of Walter, Hagen and Gunter and tries to explain them in other, unconvincing terms. This is a pity because it is not impossible to reconcile Ward's views with my own, or those of Kratz and Vynckier, whom he also dismisses. The 'anonymous' author may well be making a serious point about Germanic society and its attitude to sex and marriage; this does not prevent him from doing it in a humorous manner. Both Vynckier's and Kratz's emphasis on things Christian can well be seen as pointing out what was wrong with the German approach to women and offering a positive model to follow.

The excursus on Hrotsvit's *Gesta Ottonis* is far more compelling in its insistence on the role of women, but of course Saxony had a different attitude to women to that of whichever region the *Waltharius* author inhabited.

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Sarah Beckwith, Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings. Routledge 1993, 199 pages. ISBN 0-415-04422

Dr Beckwith describes the functions of the term 'Body of Christ' in various late medieval texts, from its use in mystical discourse to its inclusion in popular texts such as the mystery plays with a particularly illuminating chapter devoted to Margery Kempe. The exploration of readership and the assessment of who these texts were meant for is valid and fruitful, and the analysis of the metaphorical use of 'Christ's body' in relation to society and politics has also much point. It is unfortunate that the theological meaning of the phrase, whether in its primary biblical sense of 'the body of Christ which is the church' or in its eucharistic sense of 'the body of Christ which is given for you' and the relationship between the two in discussions in the fifteenth century, is not given a more central place in the argument. The intense discussion of the term in the Late Middle Ages was, after all, done by those human beings who saw the mystery plays, and is therefore relevant to however secular a discussion of the field. The other limitation of this book for the average reader is that it employs throughout the opaque language of literary criticism in the tradition of Durkheim. *Caveat lector!*

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Peter Coss, The Knight in Medieval England 1000-1400, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1993, xiv + 191pp., 13 col. 72 b/w ills.

The knight is such a popular archetype, apparently so easily understood, that Terry Jones was able to get his analysis of Chaucer's Knight into a mass publication paperback. A far smaller audience will have read Maurice Keen's scholarly rejoinder to Jones' thesis. Now academics and general readers alike have the opportunity to review the evidence in this detailed yet accessible book.

Peter Coss has produced an excellent and up-to-date synthesis, drawn from his own research and a plethora of works on the subject, mostly published over the last decade. The five chapters which comprise the main body of the book deal with the equally knotty historical issues of the origins, creation, ethos and presentation of knighthood and chivalry, while in the last he returns to some of his earlier work on knighthood in Middle English literature. His conclusion is one of continuity through change, suggesting that knighthood and romance are deeply imbedded in our culture, even today.

It is a strength of Coss' analysis that he gently unpicks the interweaving military, social and cultural threads without letting the whole picture fall apart chronologically. He stresses the continuing military role of the knight, linked to, yet distinct from, the game-playing of chivalry. The social, political and juridical role of the knightly gentry emerges from his research on the English Midlands. And this is a book about English knighthood, almost cosy in the familiarity of its terrain, although without missing the international connotations of *chevalerie*.

This point is neatly brought out by the impressive range of illustrations which form a truly integral part of the book. Monuments, manuscripts, maps and heraldry reinforce the Englishness of the institution, also architecturally represented by two knightly halls. The thirteen colour and 72 black-and-white pictures are thick on the ground for 170 pages of text, and while some are old favourites, others are not and all support the narrative well. Perhaps a translation could have been attached to the documents illustrated for those unaccustomed to reading medieval hands? Also, in the case of the Shaftesbury list of knights' fees it could have been pointed out that the picture shows a fourteenth-century copy of the twelfth-century source. Picture captions are notoriously difficult to get right, though, and overall Coss succeeds very well in explaining the point of the illustrations and tying them in to the text.

This is a fine and enjoyable book which should undo the misconceptions of any undergraduates still allowed to study medieval history. It is not perhaps the last word, since knights and knighthood seem to exercise a perennial interest for both historians and literary scholars. In 1994, the Sixth Strawberry Hill Conference on Medieval Knighthood still had something fresh to say on the subject and the Royal Historical Society has deemed it worthy of a special one-day

conference. But for a state-of-play assessment Professor Coss' book is unmatched.

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P.W. Hammond, Food and Feast in Medieval England.

Stroud, and New Hampshire, Alan Sutton, 1993, 176pp.
and 11 plates. £16.99. ISBN 0-86299-794-1

This is a most attractively presented book, offering a wide-ranging introductory guide to who ate and drank what, when and how in England between the mid-thirteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries. Its seven chapters discuss in turn the variety of indigenous and imported foodstuffs and beverages then available; the diets of peasantry, townsmen and gentry; the quality of what was consumed; contemporary and modern calculations of its nutritional value; table manners; the names, times and manner of serving meals; finally the organisation, content and character of some of the large banquets of the period. Anyone seeking details of recipes and cooking methods will be disappointed; the author states firmly that he is 'not a cook in any sense.' Some information is given about culinary equipment and tableware; rather more about food sellers, shops, markets and prices and the measures by which these were regulated. The text is copiously illustrated; besides the centrally placed colour plates, there are nearly a hundred black and white photographs and drawings. While the positioning of some of these might have been improved, they are a delight to browse through. At the end, there are also lists of notes for each chapter, a fairly substantial bibliography of the primary and secondary printed works consulted and a comprehensive index. The book has thus been carefully designed to appeal to both general and more specialist readers. Usefully, it draws upon archaeological as well as historical material.

There is repetition in the earlier part of the book and it is a pity, given the absence of any overall conclusion, that some chapters end so abruptly. Proof-reading has generally been thorough, but the odd minor blemish has escaped the net (for instance, 'braun' on p.18 and

a non-sentence on p. 82) as did at least one more substantial error. The cost of the 68,500 loaves of bread ordered for the royal wedding of 1251 (p.127) should be over '£70' not 'over £7,000'. Surely too, the *marins vénitiens* invoked on p.95 should be Venetian 'sailors' rather than 'marines'. Occasionally page references cited in the notes are imprecise or insufficient. The great strength of the book, however, is its zest for fascinating detail. Readers will enjoy discovering the functions of 'alkonneres' and 'garblers', the differences between 'wet' and 'dry' boons, 'bride', 'help' and 'scot' ales and the mysteries of 'spermyse', 'flampayne' and blaundsorr', even if, like the author, they remain partially baffled by the greater challenge of 'nosewis in compost'!

Elizabeth Matthew

Reading

Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community. Essays presented to G.W.S. Barrow, edited by A. Grant and K.J. Stringer, Edinburgh University Press, 1993, xvi+319 pp.

I begin with the last section of this book: the list of Geoffrey Barrow's publications, compiled by his daughter Julia. It is both formidable and of a length and range which suggest that Professor Barrow's research efforts can hardly be regarded as small compared to those of the contributors of the articles which make up the *Festschrift*. And what is especially pleasing about this masterly collection is the extent to which each article clearly owes so much to Barrow's own work. This is not to say that any one of them is derivative. But this is the best kind of *Festschrift*, in which the authors, setting out to honour a great scholar, have maintained a tangible link between their essays and the lines of enquiry into medieval Scotland with which Barrow's name is so distinctively associated. For Barrow, noted historian of feudal Scotland - indeed, feudal Britain - moved surely and easily in the interlinking worlds of the Norman and the Celt, on the basis of both the most rigorous record scholarship and an

instinctive sensitivity to the complexities of his subject. In so doing he built up an account of a kingdom which did indeed derive some of its *raison d'être* from Anglo-Norman England but was never simply an impoverished copy, because of the continuing vitality of its Gaelic influences. It is that sensitivity, as well as a high level of detailed scholarship, which informs the articles in this book, and makes it such a success.

Only in one respect does it not reflect all the skills of its recipient: his ability to write for a general as well as scholarly readership. This is certainly a book for the specialist. Indeed, Alan MacQuarrie's 'Kings of Strathclyde' and A.A.M. Duncan's 'Laws of Malcolm MacKenneth' are examples of research at the coal-face. More generally, its consistent theme is interaction, between feudal and kin-based societies, crown and community, periphery and core, analysed through the study of Alan of Galloway by Keith Stringer, England and Scotland, in the microcosm of the March Laws by William Scott, the Scottish Church with crown and papacy, discussed by Donald Watt. John Bannerman's fascinating elucidation of Macduff of Fife, Alexander Grant's major article on thanages, Hector MacQueen's subtle account of 'The kin of Kennedy, "Kenkynnol" and the Common Law', all bring out the success and confidence of a country whose political and social customs were, in the end, *sui generis* precisely because they developed from the starting point of assimilation of two cultures, rather than the overthrow of one by the other. Grant Simpson's lovely vignette on the minority seal of Alexander III, Elizabeth Ewan's study of thirteenth-century Aberdeen crafts, and Alan Young's discussion of the contribution of the Comyn earls of Buchan before they ratted to the English, reinforce the picture of the confidence, even sophistication, of Scotland before the Wars of Independence, while Norman Reid's beautifully crafted account of Robert I's genius in combining personal power with recognition of the political awareness of the community, and Bruce Webster's convincing plea that not just Bannockburn but the guerilla fighters of the 1330s should be remembered as the key to the successful resistance to English aggression, show why fourteenth-century Scotland so readily recovered from the body-blows of Edward I and Edward III. Only Duncan's article, dating the 'Laws of Malcolm MacKenneth' to the personal rule of David II, strikes a somewhat jarring and indeed old-fashioned note, hinting in its conclusion at the kind of history which insists that kings must do down magnates. Otherwise, to those

who wonder why, against the odds, a little northern society was so remarkably effective, the answer lies in the co-operation and willingness to amalgamate which are so tellingly brought out in this book. It makes Scotland an unusual medieval kingdom. It was precisely because of this that it achieved what it did.

As the editors point out, only a small proportion of the friends and admirers of Geoffrey Barrow could be included in a one-volume *Festschrift*. It is a tribute to them and their fellow-contributors that they have spoken so well for the silent majority, reflecting that widespread admiration and giving such pleasure to all those who have the privilege of contact, formally or informally, with a towering figure in Scottish medieval studies.

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