Reviews

Article

Published Version

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

REVIEWS

Angus MacKay and David Ditchburn, editors, Atlas of Medieval Europe, London, Routledge, 1997, 271pp. ISBN 0-415-12231-7.

What makes this volume different from previous all-encompassing handbooks of the Middle Ages is the focus on topics other than just political history while still including maps and diagrams. In this respect the present volume sits somewhere between Colin McEvedy's *New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History* and Donald Matthew's *Atlas of Medieval Europe.* Thankfully, the intention of the editors has been neither to supplant nor supercede the earlier texts. Instead they have come up with a synthesis: an atlas of medieval history covering political, social, economic, cultural and religious developments and spanning the entire period from the collapse of the Western Roman empire to the late fifteenth century. In this task they have succeeded admirably, due probably in part to the allocation of separate sections and topics to individual scholars among some 35 contributors. Therefore each short section is written by an acknowledged expert in the field, providing a succinct overview and general introduction to the topic.

The large timespan covered by the atlas is very sensibly split into three main periods: early, central and late middle ages. The themes of politics, religion, government, society and economy, and culture are discussed within each time period, visually supported by nearly 140 maps. A guide for further reading in relation to the specific themes concludes the volume, intended for 'the school or undergraduate student, or the general reader'. This is also more generally the readership aimed at by this book, and it is ideally suited to its target audience.

Irina Metzler   *University of Reading*

James France, The Cistercians in Medieval Art, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1998, 278pp. ISBN 0 7509 1583 8

This is a fascinatingly wide-ranging and detailed collection of images. All categories of Cistercians are covered, not just monks but lay-brothers and nuns also. Part of the book forms a picture-gallery of

distinguished Cistercians, while other chapters present a survey of Cistercian activities. While the coverage is extremely broad, dealing with the whole of Europe and the whole period from the foundation of Cîteaux to the late 15th century, there is space also for some striking details; St Bernard's distinctive hairstyle is discussed, as are changes in the cut of Cistercian garments from the 12th to the 15th centuries.

Overall, this book is impressive as an assemblage of both known and relatively unknown images of Cistercians, and it is clear that a good deal of careful research has gone into their discovery. However, this broad scope can in itself be a little bewildering, especially as there are representations of Cistercians, from a wide range of sources, not only Cistercian self-representations. Thus, images are frequently taken from regions with distinctive artistic schools, but there is little space for discussion of their place within these schools. Further, where an image of a Cistercian is taken from a manuscript or other source with a range of other visual material, the latter is usually noted, but there is not always space to discuss the placing or function of the 'Cistercian figure' within the overall work.

Nevertheless, this remains a compendious and impressive collection, very fully illustrated, with 26 colour plates and 174 black and white photographs. It constitutes a rich source of material for future research.

Anne Lawrence-Mathers   *University of Reading*

Tom McNeill, Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World, London, Routledge, 1997, 280pp. ISBN 0-415-16537-7

This is an attractive book. Well-illustrated with photographs, maps, plans and drawings of building features, which are usually placed appropriately close to the relevant text, it includes a gazetteer, glossary and bibliography. The material is very clearly set out, grouped by period and theme. Part I, early castles to c.1225, covers castles of stone, earth and timber and the establishment of English lordships in Ireland; Part II, mid thirteenth to mid fourteenth century, includes castles in the English fashion, castles in a divergent tradition, lesser stone castles, the central period of English lordship and castles of the Irish; Part III, the later middle ages, covers enclosure castles, tower houses and the end of castles in Ireland.

The work of earlier writers is surveyed, together with the particular circumstances of the study of castles in Ireland and problems of evidence and interpretation, including the limitations imposed by the sites which have not been excavated. Sections are pulled together with summary discussions, and the author considers patterns of castle design, building techniques and distribution.

A number of significant points are raised - for example the relative lack of real military strength in some castles despite their apparent kinship with castle design elsewhere; divergent traditions; the focus on towers; the possible association of stone structures to earth and timber structures now lost; the relationship of castle building to economic, political and social contexts, especially the realities of lordship and inheritance tradition; and the implications of castle design and distribution for an understanding of different areas and different periods in Ireland.

There could be some expansion of the analytical comment and there is scope for development in the discussion of the complex issues of 'Feudal Power in a Gaelic World'. Overall, however, this is a fascinating and very informative book.

Julia Boorman   *University of Reading*

Charles Gladitz, Horse Breeding in the Medieval World, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1997, 332pp. ISBN 1 85182 270 4

Since the advent of locomotion by steam and petrol engines, it is easy to forget the crucial function of horse power for traction, war and prestige in past societies. Schopenhauer asserted that the greatest benefit of railways was that they rescued millions of draught horses from piteous exploitation. Charles Gladitz's book on horse breeding shows up the enormous human interest and the heavy social investment necessarily taken in the task during medieval times. The basic division of the book is into 'East' and 'West', the former based upon his investigation of Turkestan, Mongolia, Manchuria and northern China (pp.27-112), the latter upon European sources with the medieval Arab authors thrown in for good measure (pp.115-192).

The book is actually far broader than the modest title suggests. We find whole histories of emergence and development in Asian societies heavily dependent upon the horse. The book is also broad in the chronological sense in that Roman authors on horse breeding are

discussed. As Mr Gladitz points out (p.210), 'Consideration of the classical authors is not irrelevant to medieval stud management' because Varro, Vergil and Columella were known to the medieval milieu of horse breeding. In any case Mr Gladitz thinks that such authors reflect 'the state of knowledge derived from observation and experience at an earlier stage of European horse breeding, knowledge which could be handed on from one generation to another even if contemporary or earlier authors were not consulted.' But I could not find mention of Vegetius's compilation *Digestorum artis mulomedicinae libri* or of Cassiodorus's famous passage on the Thuringian horses sent to Theoderic the Great in Italy.

This diverse compendium of horses, horse-borne societies, horse breeding, and of how horses were trained, fed and physicked is well worth digesting, since it tells us so much either directly or by inference about how the history of older societies was to a great extent moulded by the horse. With such a plethora particularly of Asian personal, tribal and horse breed names not familiar to the non-specialist, I found the index user-unfriendly. 'The Bayirku horses, bigger than the Boku, were, as we have seen, the same as the Karluk' comes from p.43 (diacritics elided). But I could not find Bayirku, Boku or Karluk separately in the index, or under 'Breeds' (a long list) or under 'Countries and regions' or 'Types' either. So I had to hunt back to p.38 to remind myself that 'The Bayirku were far to the east of the T'ien-shan, but their horses were said to be of the same breed as the horses of the Karluk' (diacritics elided). Now I know.

The rather dense texture of Mr Gladitz's intriguing and illuminating book needs to be leavened by reading such works as R.H.C. Davis's *The Medieval Warhorse* (1989) or Andrew Ayton's *Knights and Warhorses* (1994). The result will be a refreshing understanding of what was an obscure subject in need of new light.

Benjamin Arnold   *University of Reading*

François-Olivier Touati, Archives de la Lèpre, Paris, Editions du Comité de Travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1996, 394 pp. ISBN 2 7355 0344 5

Leprosy, the terrible disease caused by the bacteria Elephantiasis Graecorum, was, and to some extent still is, the prime example of

disease as a figure of and for social exclusion. This is from the *Everyman Encyclopedia* in 1958:

> A leper is everywhere taboo because he has the disease. It is not his fault, and he may well be uninfectious. But the taboo reacts on his chances of recovery, and a more humane view of the disease would give him much better hopes not only of being cured but of complete rehabilitation.

François-Olivier Touati's book makes a substantial contribution to the fuller development of just such a humane view. In the research that it both presents and collects together; not only in the arguments that it offers, but also in its methodologies. The book is subtitled 'Atlas des léproseries entre Loire et Marne au Moyen Age' and approximately one third of the book presents, diocese by diocese, precisely that; a listing of the 395 leproseries that can definitely be stated to have existed in the ecclesiastical province of Sens from the 12th to the 14th century. Each listing is followed by details of the dedication of the institution, together with, where possible, the date of its first appearance. The source of the reference for this is given. This is then followed by a listing of the principal bibliographical references to the institution, themselves followed, as appropriate, by any complementary manuscript sources. There are also photographs of some of the buildings, where extant. The section is completed by a collection of some thirty maps, specially drawn, showing the actual locations of leproseries in the province.

One of the striking points that the author makes in the opening chapters of argument, discussion and methodological explanation, which orient the detailed atlas, is that the evidence simply does not support the commonly held assumption that leproseries were defined as being 'outside' (*hors*) the particular town.

> Quasi unanimes, les appellations employées soulignent la *proximité* de la ville ou du bourg qui englobe la territoire de la léproserie designée. (author's emphasis)

Leprosy was visited by God on Miriam when she had spoken against Moses (Numbers, 12.10). Leviticus is unambiguous about the exclusion that the leper should enact and have enacted on him/her. But Touati challenges 'le traitement uniforme d'exclusion infligée aux malheureux lépreux.'

In the King James bible the single word leprosy is used, as a rendering of single Hebrew and Greek words (the latter transliterates as *lepra*) to describe what appear to be a range of various skin diseases. Equally, as Touati states in his introduction, singular perspectives have developed in the discussion of leprosy in the Middle Ages, whereas more plural, or multiple, perspectives enable not only a greater historical accuracy, but also a greater historical humanity, where the lepers themselves can become a part of their own history.

To achieve this has involved the author necessarily in surveying a very large corpus of texts. As he himself comments: 'Le corpus est donc à la fois immense et lacunaire, immense parce que lacunaire', but the invaluable consequence is the presentation by Touati of both an excellent inventory of sources and an extensive bibliography. Together these make up the substantial central sections of his *Archives*.

An *Encyclopedia of Medieval Civilisation* from 1980 (Aryeh Grabois,ed., Jerusalem) contains no entry for leprosy, and yet it was a constitutive part of the medieval world. Its history should no more be seen as *outside* the age's focal subjects as the leproseries *outside* the towns.

Pete Mathers   *University of Reading*

N.J. Higham, The Death of Anglo-Saxon England, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1998. 256pp. ISBN 0 7509 0885 8

The explicit aim of this book is to present the victory of William the Conqueror in October 1066 as the final step in a long-drawn-out succession crisis which began with the reign of Aethelred II (the 'Unready'). This is not an entirely new interpretation, but Higham here sets it out with great clarity and force, bringing to bear a wide range of evidence from both sides. Indeed, the attention paid to differing accounts of the key events and personalities, and to the Bayeux Tapestry in particular, is extremely valuable in a book addressed to a wide readership. The vivid discussion of the political career of Harold Godwinson is especially interesting.

To some extent, the first third of the book, which gives a detailed analysis of the factional politics of the long reign of Aethelred II, shares the same strengths. Here, considerable attention is given to identifying aristocratic factions and kinship groups, while the king

emerges as an unreliable ruler, giving undue power to favourites, and acting unjustly towards alienated factions. A fascinating picture is drawn, but at the cost of setting up two problems. First, Higham himself admits that some of the identifications of individuals, on which his arguments depend, can only be hypothetical. Secondly, important political terms are never explained, and acquaintance with a range of sources, literary as well as documentary, is assumed rather than established. This is especially a pity in a book aimed at a wide readership.

Nevertheless, Higham's arguments on the weaknesses of Aethelred's kingship, and the nature of the political class in late Anglo-Saxon England, are extremely interesting, and constitute an important view of the reign. If the rest of the book does not offer anything so forceful, it remains a valuable and well-documented account of a complex subject.

Anne Lawrence-Mathers   *University of Reading*

Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages, edited by Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1997, viii + 280 pp. ISBN 0-7509-11948

The occasion which gave rise to this collection of essays was a gathering of scholars in Cambridge in 1995 held to mark the sexcentenary of the posting of the Lollards' Twelve Conclusions on the doors of the Westminster parliament in 1395. The twelve contributions form a useful and worthwhile book, which certainly makes 'an important contribution to the field of Lollard studies in general', as the editors say, but whether it so clearly highlights 'the centrality of Lollard knights and knightly religion to the challenge faced by the fifteenth-century English church', as they also claim, is perhaps open to question. The emphasis is not systematically on knights, there being as much on non-knightly gentry and on other groups like townsmen, and, valuable as all the essays are individually, they are rather too diverse in content and approach to permit a full exploration of knightly involvement. The chronological span extends from the 1380s to the early sixteenth century, and, while most of the essays are concerned with England, there is an isolated study by Pawel Kras of 'Hussitism and the Polish nobility'. In many ways the editors' introduction, which is among the longer essays, is the most satisfying, underlining the fruits of recent research on 'lay' Lollardy in

general, in particular the conclusions that 'macabre loathing of the flesh' was by no means peculiar to Lollard wills, a point examined by J.F. Thomson in this collection; and that reading or possession of biblical texts in English did not necessarily indicate heresy, since they are found frequently in noble and gentle circles of impeccable orthodoxy, but rather that the authorities deemed such activities suspect for those of lower status.

All the essays contain much of interest. Among the more rewarding for the present reviewer are Maureen Jurkowski's discussion of lawyers and Lollardy in the early fifteenth century which, by focussing on a group of Lollard or quasi-Lollard midland lawyers, suggests reasons why such men might have been intellectually and professionally attracted to Lollardy; and Rob Lutton's analysis of the wills of certain families in Tenterden (Kent) in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which stresses the common origins of both Lollardy and radical orthodoxy, and has useful things to say on the networks of relationships that might exist in a local community not dominated by large family estates. Geoffrey Martin writes about 'Knighton's Lollards', providing a sympathetic study of the chronicler's reaction to what was for him his abbey's distasteful association with Lollardy; Anne Hudson reviews the arguments developed againts clerics serving in secular (especially royal) office; Fiona Somerset examines the audience for, and methodolgy of, Roger Dymmok's treatise refuting the Lollard conclusions; while John Scattergood's contribution on 'Pierce the Ploughman's Crede' finds evidence for divisions among Lollards over the use of the Bible and other books. In *'De Heretico Comburendo,* 1401', A.K. McHardy discusses the hasty and ad hoc movement to enact this statute, arguably not really needed, since the Crown already possessed capital powers over heretics if needed. Christian von Nolcken examines a letter written to a friend by Richard Wyche while in prison under suspicion of heresy in 1403, containing a remarkable autobiographical account of his experiences. Norman Tanner analyses the penances imposed on Kentish Lollards by Archbishop Warham in 1511-12, which, he believes, 'may prove to be the fullest and most sophisticated collection of penances enacted' for Lollards; and in an intriguing final essay Andrew Hope reconstructs the long and varied career of William Sweeting, who met a heretic's death by burning in 1511.

The book is well produced, refreshingly free of printing errors, and - most commendably - is provided with an index, which makes the volume eminently more usable, but which is missing from so many similar collections of essays.

Brian Kemp   *University of Reading*

Jerry Sampson, Wells Cathedral West Front: construction, sculpture and conservation, Stroud, Glos., Sutton Publishing, 1998, 298pp. ISBN 0-7509-1450-5

This book has its origins in controversy. In 1973 George Zarnecki, Henry Moore and others wrote to *The Times*. Their letter was highly critical of the proposed restoration of the Coronation of the Virgin group at Wells Cathedral. Sampson's survey of the west front is in large part the result of the ensuing debate. It is not difficult to detect the resulting tensions and compromises as a barely concealed sub-text. His silence on the modern figure of Christ in the gable is deafening.

Chapters are devoted to the construction, sculpture, painting, design, and meaning of the west front. Doubtless this survey will be required reading not only for those interested in the fabric of Wells Cathedral, but also for anyone studying medieval buildings and sculpture. Its greatest value lies in some of the insights that Sampson's close observations gives us into the techniques and practice of medieval builders and sculptors. Sampson posits a convincing building history, failing only to crown the west front with the spires that must have been intended originally . He speculates to great effect as to how one group of masons replaced another; how the sculptors worked alongside, but not with the builders; and shows how mistakes were corrected using a glue made from wax and powdered stone.

By the author's own admission this is a heavily revised selection from an archaeological report, and it is prodigious in its detail. As such it may prove inaccessible to many readers. The sculptures are referred to throughout using an arcane numbering system. Although the book is lavishly illustrated the plates and diagrams are unnumbered, and are rarely referred to in the text. Most curious of all is the selection. Only three of the large figures are illustrated, whilst three photographs show modern conservators at work. We are told that the astonishing variation in style, and even stone, used on a series of

angels may indicate that they acted as test pieces for sculptors seeking employment. Yet only one is illustrated. It is to be regretted that in a book that is the result of a conservation programme there are no 'before and after' pictures. This is certainly an informative and thought provoking addition to the literature. However, to follow some of the arguments one needs either an encyclopedic knowledge of the building or access to a good photographic archive.

Brian O'Callaghan   *University of Reading*

Benjamin R. Gampel (ed.), Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World 1391-1648, Columbia University Press, 1997, 256 pp. ISBN 0 582 29215 8

This volume originated as a set of conference papers, and as such succeeds in making available significant new research into the changing patterns of 15th to 17th century Sephardic Jewish life. Further than this, however, it is both comprehensive and informative, providing the reader with a broad introduction to the Sephardic world through a wide range of papers.

Parts one and two create an image of the Sephardic communities in the era before the expulsion from the Iberian lands in 1492, providing evidence of a broadly acculturated society, yet in the same instance one which also accepted exile and persecution as part of its cultural heritage. The vivid depiction of cultural life in the late 14th century is tempered by analysis of growing intolerance from non-Jewish parties, as evidenced by the expulsion. Part three contains extensive discussion of the events surrounding 1492, addressing issues such as antecedents and causality. In-depth textual analysis provides a 'human' element through readings of chronicle and testimonial, whilst biographical evidence sets personal experiences within the broader picture.

The remaining three sections raise the question of reaction within this changing social and economic situation. The concepts of self-definition and continued group resilience are addressed by Yosef Kaplan and Jacob Barnai, whilst Renata Segre's portrayal of Ferraran families again takes the reader from the level of general information into a more individual experience. Spirituality, art and literature are taken as broad areas of definition, but are then treated with detailed analysis to counteract the traditional view of this period as one of

dispersion and decline. Experienced authors such as Idel, Tirosh-Samuelson and Carpenter strive to prove the continued vitality of the communal and cultural experience, highlighting the resilience of human nature in the face of persecution.

Overall this is a detailed and informative volume of potential textbook status. Unfortunately the excellent historical overview and complementary areas of personal details are undermined by the complete absence of any geographical or demographic material. This is however the only flaw in an otherwise exceptional volume.

Amanda Howie   *University of Reading*

Margaret M. Boland, Architectural Structure in the Lais of Marie de France, Peter Lang; New York, (Currents in comparative romance languages and literatures; vol. 21), 1997, viii + 226 pp. ISBN 0 820 42224 X

The rationale behind this book is that the *Lais* of the Harley Manuscript 978 'were assembled or composed in the order in which they are placed in this manuscript and that they form a unity both in structure and in thought.' On this basis the author aims 'to show not only that an order exists, but also that this order has an inner meaning, even an underlying allegory locked within a particular arrangement.' (p.1) No allowance is made for scribal interference or imperfect manuscript tradition. Instead an elaborate scheme is worked out in which the lais are divided into pairs, first of all parallels (I and VII, II and VIII etc.) and then alternates (I and II, III and IV etc). The coupling of *Guigemar* and *Yonec* (I adn VII) seems much more arbitrary than the pairing of *Guigemar* and *Equitan* (I and II) where some useful contrasts can be drawn. The inner meaning and underlying allegory which the *Lais* contain are religious, with the different characters richly endowed with symbolic meaning. Equitan represents David the sinner and sufferer, while Lanval is the stranger in exile comforted by the Holy Spirit (his fairy mistress). The cynic might be a little surprised that David is so unsuccessful and that the Holy Spirit is so carnally active. The meaning of each poem is affected by the one with which it is coupled. *Eliduc* and *Les Deuz Amans*, for example, are paired so that the young lover in *Les Deuz Amanz* lives again in Eliduc, and both the young lovers are subsumed into the love triangle of the later poem. The whole elaborate

construction would collapse if the Harley Manuscript were shown to
be in any way untrue to what Marie herself had written. Even if the
reader is able to accept the theory that all twelve poems are interlinked
in this way with the purpose of expounding an extremely elaborate
religious symbolism, the couplings of the poems are themselves
arbitrary. The parallelism is devised by the author. She gives us little
evidence to suggest that it existed for Marie. Some of the religious
symbolism (in *Laostic* for example) is effective whether the
architectural theory is accepted or not, but overall it is unconvincing.
There are a few misprints (p.32 lengthily explanation, p.157 renown
for renowned) and there are some surprising omissions (Burgess,
Clifford, Sienaart) from the lengthy bibliography.

Peter Noble   *University of Reading*

**Sharon Collingwood, Market Pledge and Gender Bargain.
Commercial Relations in French Farce, 1450-1550**, New
York, Lang, 1996, (Studies in the Humanities 23), xii + 209 pp.
ISBN 0 8204 2869 8

This book focusses on an extremely prominent, but relatively under-
studied, feature of the French farce: the language, ritual and
symbolism of commercial relations. A brief presentation of the
corpus of farces under consideration is followed by five chapters.
'Money in its Cultural Context' describes the monetary systems in
vigour in the late Middle Ages, and the importance, both economic
and symbolic, of gold and coin. The second chapter, 'The English
Manuals of French Conversation and the Farce' introduces a source of
information susceptible of shedding additional light on attitudes
towards commercial transactions: the language manual for medieval
English businessmen. The bargain scenes in these manuals, analysed
in some detail, then serve as points of comparison with similar scenes
in *La Farce de Maître Pierre Pathelin* and its later reworking, *Le
Nouveau Pathelin* (chapters 3 and 4). In the fifth chapter, 'The Gender
Bargain', we move to the second area promissed by the title of the
book. Collingwood surveys popular customs of marriage and
betrothal, then shows their relevance to our understanding of the
depiction of relationships between men and women in her corpus of
French farces.

The farce, as a genre, is shown to be dominated by transactional mentality; the desire for personal gain is constantly balanced by an acute understanding of the limits imposed on it by the urban community, and an awareness of the necessity of compromise. Collingwood thus notes that, typically, neither the tricksters nor their victims belong to the local commercial community, whilst bargaining customs in farces dealing with marriage or adultery point to a predominantly conservative message. Conjugal territories, the borders between them, the transactions across them are negotiated using the terminology and ritual of bargaining customs, stressing the importance for the farce writers of free consent in the formation of the marriage contract; attempts to break or renegotiate existing gender contracts without free consent inevitably prove to be failures.

Market Pledge and Gender Bargain is well-argued and well-researched; potentially confusing technicalities (especially relating to coinage) are described in clear terms accessible to all, and all quotes are translated. This makes the book ideal for students or comparatists. But what I most enjoyed was the perceptive treatment of the texts themselves; some of the most difficult passages of these farces are analysed in a manner both rigorous and lively, bringing out the comic element obscured to contemporary readers by the passage of timeand changes in customs. Definitely a must for anyone studying *Pathelin*, the farces, or indeed the fabliaux.

Françoise Le Saux   *University of Reading*

Zygmunt G Baranski ed., 'Libri poetarum in quattuor species dividuntur': essays on Dante and 'genre'', *The italianist* 15, Supplement 2, (1995), 170 pp.

This collection of essays relates Dante's work to four literary 'genres', the 'quattuor species' of the title (from a quotation, the introduction informs us, from Honorius Augustodunensis): comedy, tragedy, satire and lyric. They assume a varying degree of specialist interest and there is a certain imbalance in the allocation of space as well as inconsistencies over whether or not Latin quotations are to be translated (in the main they are not). This may however be more acceptable in a supplement to a journal than it would be in a book.

Two long essays by Zygmunt Baranski take uo over half the volume. The first looks critically at the concept of 'genre' as applied

to medieval literature and concludes that it is inappropriate. A medieval poet would draw on a more variable, fluid and wide-ranging pool of literary resources with overlapping schemes and systems of classification. The second returns to the topic of Dante and Comedy on which Baranski has already written. His emphasis here is on Dante's use of 'comedy' as a critical tool, and his response to the flexibility of the term. Baranski argues strongly and persuasively against Dante's authorship of the disputed Letter to Cangrande on the grounds that the use of literary terms in this work lacks the originality of Dante's usage elsewhere.

Jeremy Schnapp's interesting essay, 'Tragedy and the theatre of Hell' considers the survival of ancient tragedy in the form of infernal spectacle. In this context he examines Mussato's *Ecerinis* with its portrayal of demonic political evil in contemporary Italy. Suzanne Reynolds examines medieval *accessus* to Horace for an understanding of satire and its relation to the *sermo humilis*. Her essay is followed by a collection of relevant texts. Finally, Michelangelo Picone shows how Dante selects and adapts the various troubadour literary forms in the *Vita Nuova* in order to create a poetic autobiography.

Jennifer Petrie   *University College, Dublin*

Alfred Raucheisen, Orient und Abendland. Ethische-moralische Aspekte in Wolframs Epen *'Parzival'* und *'Willehalm'*. Frankfurt am Main, Lang, 1997 (Bremer Beiträge zur Literatur- und Ideengeschichte 17), 198pp. ISBN 3-631-30966-X.

The Orient, as Edward Said has forcibly reminded us, has been 'a lasting trauma' to the Western world, at no time more acute than at the time of the Crusades, and we are fortunate that the idiosyncratic Wolfram von Eschenbach foregrounded that sectarian background both in *Parzival* and in his less celebrated (anti-)crusade epic, *Willehalm*. Alfred Raucheisen's book (based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Hamburg in 1996) does full justice to Wolfram's originality or what he terms his 'Jonglieren mit Konventionen' (p. 160) in advancing a remarkably ecumenical vision many centuries before the Enlightenment. Of course, much ink has been spilled over the question of Wolfram's religious views (not least because of the difficulty of divining intimate habits of thought of generations prior to our own) and a good part of Raucheisen's duty has been to

adjudicate between the various strands of opinion and theory already put forward on this subject. For instance, the query as to whether Wolfram's supposed tolerance of the heathen (Feirefiz in *Parzival*, Vivianz, Matribleiz and others in *Willehalm*) can be compared with the kind of unconditional tolerance of the Other which we encounter in Goethe or in Lessing at a much later period is accorded a separate excursus ('Wie tolerant ist die Toleranzrede?' -sc. of Gyburg in *Willehalm* - on pp.173-176) Furthermore, Raucheisen's central argument that utopian thought structures outside the orthodox parameters of Church dogma were by no means foreign to medieval people is amply demonstrated by his close readings of Wolfram's works.

That contention is indeed further borne out by historical work (cf. Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading* 1095-1274, Oxford, Clarendon 1985), which confirms Raucheisen's thesis that the much-bruited 'alterity' of the medieval period was not so totally alien(ated) from modern conceptions as might appear to be the case at first glance. Germany in the early thirteenth century was a time of spiritual flux in which for instance the lyric poet Albrecht von Johansdorf could record the sceptical or perhaps mocking view of some Crusaders to the effect that, if God really wished Jeruslasem to be relieved, he would have resources enough of his own to do so without having to compel mortal soldiers to do his work for him. 'Why does God allow the Muslims to win so many battles?' was a common question which led some Christians to doubt their own faith and embrace other mythological systems, as Norman Cohn has amply demonstrated. It is therefore anything but improbable that the pressures of the age should have pushed Wolfram to the kind of positive Orientalism which Raucheisen (and others) posit.

Any discussion of the Orient in *Parzival* must take into account the figure of Parzival's half-brother, Feirefiz. Raucheisen of course does this (esp. pp.161-165), largely following the readings of Wapnewski, Blamires and others to the effect that Feirefiz can be read as a less mature and enlightened version of Parzival himself. That may be, but there is, in my view, a further 'moral aspect' to his appearance inasmuch as the introduction of the brother may have helped Wolfram to cover and amend a previous narrative inconsistency. That is, it was one of what are commonly termed the 'premises of the Grail' that the quest should be achieved without prompting from third parties. Parzival, by contrast, is primed by his visit to the hermit uncle,

Trevrizent, to undertake the quest successfully and to direct the compassionate question to the ailing Grail king, Anfortas. Yet he shows a far greater degree of what we would now term moral autonomy in his 'second' compassionate act when inducting his brother into the Arthurian fold and in leading him towards the Grail. Parzival becomes thereby a more credible grail quester for having reached the moral standard demanded of that office (albeit retrospectively). Feirefiz has of course a story of his own, but here as elsewhere in Wolfram, minor figures are mobilised to illuminate the spiritual health (or otherwise) of Parzival himself (as I intend to show in greater detail elsewhere).

Raucheisen makes a worthy and very clear contribution to a topic which remains central in Wolfram studies. It is to be recommended for student use and also as a back-up to undergraduate/postgraduate courses on the Crusades in history studied with an interdisciplinary focus.

Neil Thomas   *University of Durham*

David Burnley, Courtliness and Literature in Medieval England, Longman Medieval and Renaissance Library, London and New York, 1998, xiii + 241 pp. ISBN 0 528 29216 6

This critical introduction is a comprehensive study of the theme of courtliness in English literature. It uses a thematic approach, treating subjects such as early heroic literature, the development of romance, the influence of monastic culture and the values associated with courtliness in some detail. While this work is addressed to students and the general reader, its approach is by no means simplistic. The author assumes his audience to have a solid grounding in Chaucer, and does not hesitate to quote extensively from less well-known poets. Middle English extracts are not translated apart from the occasional word. Nor does he restrict himself to English texts; many of the passages quoted are in Old English, Old French and Anglo-Norman, accompanied by full and accurate translations, although it is interesting that one reference in French to a lady's private parts is left untranslated (III, n.6).

The author bases his research mainly on the lexical analysis of key words such as 'curtesie', 'pruesce', 'mesure' and 'gentilesse'. He traces the development of these terms through the medieval period, setting

them firmly in a social context and giving an explanation of the values and ideals each reflects. Well-chosen extracts from a wide selection of medieval literature, both English and French, are used to examine these key words; while the author betrays a particular weakness for Wace and Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*, he also displays his familiarity with such a variety of works that his list of primary sources is most impressive for an introductory volume.

The opening chapter is devoted to a general historical account of the state of nobility and knighthood from the Anglo-Saxon period to the twelfth century, drawing parallels between such works as *Beowulf* and the *Chanson de Roland* and the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*. The following chapters form the main body of the work, and explore the development of courtliness from its origins in the early medieval period to its flowering in court literature and its gradual acceptance as a part of urban society by the late fourteenth century. Burnley argues that courtliness emerged from social life in the feudal hall and was then influenced by later aesthetic ideals of nobility and beauty. There is a detailed enumeration and description of the skills, natural advantages and social behaviour associated with courtliness in each century. The question of inner versus outer nobility is examined; while originally the two were inseparable, by the later Middle Ages the development of a new philosophical morality gave rise to the view that defects of birth could be remedied by education. Few angles are left untouched; we are given an overview of medieval physiology, Christian values and social upheavals. The chapter on the central theme of courtly love contains an exposition of modern critical theory from Gaston Paris and Bédier to C.S.Lewis; the author proposes a much wider definition of 'amor' than that of Paris and argues against Lewis on several points.

Burnley's bibliography of both primary and secondary sources is an invaluable aid to any student of medieval courtliness, as are the detailed footnotes at the end of each chapter. On the whole this is an excellent edition, whose accessible style and wide range of information will make it indispensable to students of the period and by no means uninteresting to the more specialised reader.

Rosemary Tzanaki   *University of Reading*

Ad Putter, *'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* **and French Arthurian Romance.** Oxford, Clarendon, 1995, 279pp. ISBN 0-19-818253-8.

The professed aim of this study is to make intertextual comparisons between the Middle English poem and the older French romance tradition of Chrétien de Troyes and his myriad successors (Renaut de Beaujeu, Raoul de Houdenc and others), a method which the author presents as being a more sophisticated extension of the old sources-and-analogues approach:

> If we wish to discover what the *Gawain* poet got out of French romance, we need a book that looks for broader connections -connections for example between the heroic ideal in *Gawain* and in earlier Arthurian romances, between their interest in polite manners in interpersonal relations- and which considers the stock of literary motifs and conventions out of which courtly romancers constructed their fictional worlds. (p. 5)

Thus for instance Putter takes two scenes (one from *GGK*, one from Chrétien's *Perceval*) where the hero journeys through a forest weeping tears of repentance, in order to show how the heroes of both works are 'thrown back on themselves and meditate on their follies': these scenes are termed 'succinct expressions of the same motif' (p.24).

Readers will find Putter's comparisons stimulating and resourceful and there is no trouble about conceding to the author his general case that the Gawain poet is more of the school of Chrétien than of the 'insular' branch of English romances. Whether he had a detailed knowledge of Chrétien's successors through postulated intermediaries now lost is, however, a more debatable contention. In any case, the post-Chrétien corpus is a highly diverse one in which little uniformity of transmissible 'tone' is perceptible. Raoul de Houdenc, for instance, wrote in *Meraugis de Portlesguez* a fine-feeling story of how a knight who truly loves a lady triumphs over a rival whose 'love' for the same lady is of the purely physical variety. By contrast (assuming the authorial ascription to be correct), he also wrote the misogynistic *Vengeance Raguidel* which presents in the female character of Ydain a particularly unfeeling and repellent image of her sex. Ultimately the English poem must be allowed to stand alone, its theme and taut narrative structure different from Chrétien and from his

often prolix successors. It is an 'English' work not, as Putter rightly points out (p.135, note 38) because it puts forward in the Temptation scenes a sexually continent conception of courtesy against supposedly freer 'French' notions of *courtoisie* but rather because its East Midlands author used an antecedent French tradition to create a powerfully independent romance far superior to the sum of its (French) parts. Comparisons with a raft of French stories predating it by some two centuries can enrich close readings of the text but finally the Middle English poem must be understood on its own terms as an original meditation on our common human mortality and how we (fail to) deal with it.

The strength of Putter's book (*pace* his title) is that he takes the French background as a springboard from which to reexamine other themes such as the work's moral philosophy (including the possibility of Classical influences), its status as a stage in the 'civilizing process' (with reference to medieval works on courtesy), the audience and the social function of the romance (with an original section on 'Mercantilism', p. 229-243). It is a book which can be recommended to all readers of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, not just to those interested in the 'French background' and the realm of *Stoffgeschichte*.

Neil Thomas   *University of Durham*