

Short Notices

Alban, Kevin J., *The Teaching and Impact of the 'Doctrinale' of Thomas Netter of Walden (c. 1374–1430)* (Medieval Church Studies, 7), Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; cloth; pp. xvi, 298; 4 b/w tables; R.R.P. €85.00; ISBN 9782503531793.

Thomas Netter studied arts at a Carmelite *studium* in London and theology at Oxford, became the Carmelite Provincial Superior for England in 1414, confessor to Henry V in 1422, and subsequently tutor to Henry VI, and attended the councils of Pisa in 1409 and probably Constance in 1414, as well as trials of alleged Lollards in England. He is reported to have written a number of other works, but only a collection of correspondence and the substantial *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae contra Wiclevistas et Hussitas libri VI*, completed in the 1420s with the encouragement of Pope Martin V, are extant.

The *Doctrinale* is one of a number of Catholic refutations of John Wyclif (c. 1330–1384), Lollardy, and the Hussites. It presents a defence against their criticism or interpretations of the dual natures of Christ, the problem of predestination, Church and Papacy, mendicancy and contemplation, the seven sacraments, and a range of devotional practices. Netter summarizes the positions he opposes, before presenting biblical, Patristic, and other arguments in support of orthodox belief and practice; the work reflects an independent approach rather than a conventional Scholastic presentation. It is not a comprehensive theological *summa*, although Kevin Alban argues that the book is of broader usefulness than merely a refutation of heresy.

Alban provides a survey of the principal arguments of each book of the *Doctrinale*, rounded out with a biographical sketch of Netter, some contextualization of his theology, and a review of the historical influence of the *Doctrinale* to Vatican II. The book reads like a dissertation (PhD, London University, 2007), and is not a thorough examination of the subjects it addresses. Alban's acquaintance with medieval philosophy seems to be largely dependent upon secondary literature, while the positions of Wyclif that were refuted by Netter are not always clearly explained. The discussion of Augustine's doctrine of predestination is less than satisfactory; equally significant is the problem, apparently unrecognized, that both Wyclif and Netter (among other medieval authors) could draw upon the same 'authorities' such as Augustine, but reach divergent conclusions.

There is little reference to longer-running medieval debates such as those over poverty and ecclesiastical wealth, or the authority of the papacy, and their possible influence on Wyclif or Netter. The discussion raises other questions, such as, if Wyclif's views were formulated not merely on an intellectual level but also in response to specific contemporary social circumstances, then does Netter's reply adequately address those same circumstances? Evidently not, at least in justifying the wealth of the Church. Alban's emphasis on Carmelite traditions is also perhaps a little one-sided.

The text of the *Doctrinale*, last printed in 1757–59, is not widely accessible, and while it has attracted the attention of scholars of Lollardy, it has not been the subject of much detailed study. It is an achievement to have distilled an obviously complex and lengthy text into a readable introduction, as Alban has done, and his work affords a useful reference.

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Burton, T. L., *William Barnes's Dialect Poems: A Pronunciation Guide*, Adelaide and Provo, UT, Chaucer Studio Press, 2010: cloth; pp. xx, 288; 1 map, audio CD; R.R.P. AU\$75.00; ISBN 9780842527606.

William Barnes was one of the great nineteenth-century autodidacts. Leaving school at thirteen, he taught himself many languages, learned to play three instruments, and wrote prodigiously. He had a particular interest in the history of the English language and its dialects but his poems in Dorsetshire dialect provide his principal claim to fame: the first was published in a local newspaper in 1834 and was followed by many others, including three collections. Barnes established himself as a major minor poet, carefully reproducing Dorset dialect in two different kinds of phonetic spelling.

Thomas Burton's book addresses a particular problem, namely, how to pronounce Barnes's poems. To this end, he provides a detailed account of the realization of the twenty main vowels of English in Barnes's Dorset dialect; a similar treatment of consonants (including iconic features of west country dialects such as 'z' for Standard English 's'); line-by-line commentary on three poems; and phonetic transcriptions of eighteen poems. There are also three appendices containing Barnes's own writing about Dorset dialect and his specimen of Winterborne Came local speech, a table of key rhymes, and an *index verborum*, as well as an audio CD of readings and a map. Thus we have a whole box of tools with which to unlock the pronunciation Barnes intended for his poems – essential for reading his work since all his poetry is rhymed.

Burton's book draws on an enormous amount of detailed research, consulting specific studies of Dorset dialect (including Barnes's own), general works on English pronunciation, and general dialect surveys such as the monumental work of A. J. Ellis and later *The Survey of English Dialects*. All of this material has been mastered and expertly deployed; yet for such a technical subject it is all immensely readable. The value of this excellent book lies both in the intrinsic interest of the subject and in introducing us to the full enjoyment of a very fine poet. It is easy to forget just how important dialect poetry was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although we have only to think of Burns to realize what dialect poets were able to achieve. Barnes is an important part of this tradition and this book makes it possible for us to enjoy the aural subtleties of his work for the first time, perhaps, since his lifetime.

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Cassidy-Welch, Megan, *Imprisonment in the Medieval Religious Imagination, c. 1150–1400*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; hardback; pp. 208; R.R.P. £50.00; ISBN 9780230242487.

Megan Cassidy-Welch's study is an investigation of the idea of imprisonment in religious culture during the "long" thirteenth century' (p. 126) in England, France, and Germany, rather than a book about prison history. The idea of imprisonment, extending to captivity, bondage, and enclosure, is explored in a number of contexts including monasticism, hagiography, heresy trials, and the crusades. Cassidy-Welch argues that imaginings of prison were linked to the attainment of spiritual freedoms, resulting in a positive valuation of imprisonment as a 'site of spiritual opportunity' (p. 124) in the medieval religious imagination.

Imprisonment served as a metaphor for monastic enclosure, and in regulatory texts, advice texts, and visitation registers, voluntary confinement in monasteries and anchoritic cells aimed to free the soul from the world, and to protect virginity. Monastic prisons punished malefactors but also offered opportunities for prayer, repentance, and penance. The 'gendered language of enclosure' (p. 12) is also examined in some detail.

Chapter 2 explores imprisonment in hagiography, focusing almost exclusively on the cult of St Leonard of Noblac at Inchenhofen, Germany. St Leonard liberated prisoners, and in accounts of Leonard's life and miracles, prison became a place of encounter with divine mercy. Freed by St Leonard's

intercession, wrongdoers were converted and the righteous rewarded for their persevering prayers. Bodily and spiritual freedom was confirmed in the corporeo-spiritual activity of pilgrimage to Leonard's shrine.

The third and fifth chapters examine the idea of imprisonment in the combat against enemies of the faith. Inquisitorial prisons in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France functioned as sites of fear and memory to elicit truth and liberate souls from heresy, as well as serving penitential and, in the case of obdurate heretics, punitive purposes. Using chronicle and sermon accounts of the brief imprisonment of Louis IX, the author traces the way in which the idea of captivity in the context of the crusades was transformed from one of shame for the captive crusader to one of virtuous suffering, in order to promote the steadfast piety and sanctity of the imprisoned king. A further chapter covers captivity in didactic texts including exempla, sermons, hagiography, and crusade literature, revealing correlations between physical confinement and the promise of spiritual liberation. Much of the material, however, supports points made, or themes covered, in other chapters.

This engaging exploration of the spiritual value of imprisonment in the Middle Ages should be of interest to scholars interested in monasticism, hagiography, miracle accounts and exempla, inquisition, heresy, and the crusades.

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Crossley, John Newsome, *Hernando de los Ríos Coronel and the Spanish Philippines in the Golden Age*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011; hardback; pp. 260; 5 tables; R.R.P. £65.00; ISBN 9781409425649.

I strongly recommend this exemplary, first full-length study of Hernando de los Ríos Coronel, whom John Crossley proves was highly important to the early history of his adopted community, and thus rescues from oblivion. The study's scholarly foundations, and the fields which it bears upon befit their subject's own diverse talents, duties, and roles; for Hernando de los Ríos Coronel, a 28-year-old former soldier, reached the Philippines 'as a private man ... in 1588 ... only 24 years after the first Spanish settlement of the Philippines' (p. xii), and, once there, served as hospital administrator, captain of infantry, navigator, inventor, and priest. He also became, for two extended periods – including his last seven years – the colony's sole advocate at the Spanish Court, where he represented both Spaniards and Indigenes (p.

3). It is, indeed, appropriate that Crossley should call him 'the single most important person of his time from the Philippines' (p. xii).

Examples, encompassing over thirty years, concerning science, religion, administration, shipbuilding, trade, diplomacy, and other matters, illustrate for the reader a selfless, even fearless individual, prepared to stop the abuses of superiors and protect Indigenes from arbitrary exploitation (pp. 80, 156); Crossley, thus, sheds light on the problems that beset Spain's 'colony too far'.

One of these was the Dutch threat, not simply to occasional cargo ships, but to Spain's very survival in the Philippines, as demonstrated when the Dutch raided the Spanish fleet anchored in Manila Bay in 1617, at the Battle of Playa Honda, which the Spanish barely survived, fighting the enemy off 'with great difficulty' (p. 149).

The journey from Manila to Spain – sailing west, via Mexico – took two years, commencing with a five-month Pacific-crossing (p. 3) – in which 'as many as half the people' on a ship would die, with scurvy being the major cause (p. 1). Yet, characteristically, as advocate for the colony, the dutiful De los Ríos embarked on his second and final journey to Spain when already far from young, in 1617 – years after his original 1605–10 journey back – one of the main concerns that he had being 'the urgent need for a relief fleet to protect Manila and the Philippines, against the Dutch' (p. 149). Indeed, the urgency of his mission could not be overstated, because, in 1619, when he arrived in Madrid to plead to the king for military support for the Philippines, the Junta de Guerra (High Command) heatedly 'argued ... as to whether the Philippines should be abandoned' (p. 149).

Thus, Crossley says of De los Ríos in the conclusion to this book: 'without him the Philippines might well have been lost to the Dutch or swapped for Brazil, or, even worse perhaps, the Islands could have been completely forgotten by Spain. But they were not. What mattered most to him, and he was quite explicit about this, was that he had always done his duty, to king and to God, and thereby to his fellows, without fear or favour' (p. 181).

This is the biography of a fascinating individual, brought back to life through the archive. It is, in addition, a biographical study which succeeds remarkably well in conjuring up the complex, tragic age, and the places in which that subject lived his life – from Colonial Manila to Mexico, and to the Imperial Court in Golden Age Madrid, the seat of empire.

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Cuder-Domínguez, Pilar, *Stuart Women Playwrights, 1613–1713* (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama), Farnham, Ashgate, 2010; hardback; pp. 158; R.R.P. £50.00; ISBN 9780754667131.

Ambitious in scope, this careful study by Pilar Cuder-Domínguez traces an entire century of drama written by women, particularly focusing on tragedies and tragicomedies identified as neglected by critics and editors, despite their having made important contributions to the development of early modern drama. Cuder-Domínguez situates her work in relation to ‘new historicism and cultural materialism, feminism and post-colonialism’ (p. 10), stressing that the patriarchal idea of ‘so-called major [male] playwrights’ from whom women playwrights took ‘their cue ... now seems to be on the wane’ (p. 5).

The book covers the century between 1613 and 1713, dates which are, respectively, ‘the date of publication of the first original tragedy by an Englishwoman’ (p. 9) – Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* – and the date of publication of the folio edition of Anne Finch’s works. Though brief – at 127 footnoted pages, besides the index and bibliography – the study’s seven chapters, which address these years systematically and in detail, attest to painstaking research and organization.

Discussion in Chapter 2 of Cary’s *Mariam* is a case in point for its inter-implication of ‘Categories of race, class and gender’, which are ‘in constant flux’ (p. 11); there, the villain, Salome, is shown to react to a double subordination, as both woman and as someone ‘of Idumean descent’ (p. 11), whose ‘consistent othering ... as a dark woman in relation to Mariam’s fairness’, also carries moral implications, historically available in such ‘binary oppositions ... as white/black, fair/dark, [and] virtuous/evil’ (p. 33).

Chapters 3 and 4, are, in turn, devoted to the Interregnum and the Restoration, respectively. When exploring the drama of the Restoration – late 1660s and 1670s specifically – Cuder-Domínguez identifies some common points, such as the ‘contrastive pair(s)’ of characters, which suggest ‘the Mariam/Salome, passive/active conundrum that we first encountered in [*Mariam*] at the outset of the seventeenth century’ (p. 58).

The author also pays thorough attention to the extensive use made of Spanish dramatic sources and geographical and historical settings in the Interregnum and Restoration dramas (Chapters 3 and 4). For example, Chapter 4 includes discussion of Aphra Behn’s only tragedy, *Abdelazer*, dealing with a late medieval story of ‘the revenge of the Moorish Prince on the Spanish royal family that took away his inheritance and rightful place in the world’ (p. 68). Sexual passion is, thence, identified as a weakness, and ascribed strongly to the female gender in the person of the Queen Mother, whom the Moor

seduces and deploys to successfully carry out his revenge, as he ‘manages to wreck the kingdom’ (pp. 68–69).

Chapter 5 deals with late Stuart writers of tragedy: Mary Pix, Delarivier Manley, Catharine Trotter, and the mysterious ‘Ariadne’, as the ‘shift to women-centered pathos’ transformed the ‘tragic ideal’, which, then, became a distinctly *passive* (not ‘passionate’) ‘virtuous demureness’. As the author explains regarding the culture of the latter part of the Restoration period, ‘passion was to be condemned in a cultural climate that ... emphasized ... morality and virtue’ (p. 82).

Chapters 6 and 7 engage with Catharine Trotter’s historical tragedies, as well as such plays as Jane Wiseman’s *Antiochus the Great* and Anne Finch’s *Aristomenes* (1690; pub. 1713). As Cuder-Domínguez suggests, the late publication of Anne Finch’s play, so many years after its original stage production, was probably in order to appeal to the public ‘against the Hanoverian succession’, and on behalf of the Stuarts, the son and heir of the late James II, of whom the play’s hero may have reminded the audience (p. 127).

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested generally in Stuart drama, and also to those specifically interested in early modern women’s writing.

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Edmondson, George, *The Neighboring Text: Chaucer, Boccaccio, Henryson*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2011; paperback; pp. 296; R.R.P. US\$40.00; ISBN 9780268027759.

Chaucer is a staple of any medieval English degree, but both Henryson and this particular Boccaccio text are much less familiar. Having flourished in the English Language and Early English Literature (ELEEL) school at Sydney in the 1980s this reviewer recognizes the critical apparatus at play in this work. Indeed, it is somewhat reassuring to find a contextualizing, poststructuralist analysis that is not afraid to speak about ideology, anxieties, politics, and resistances.

Edmondson’s reading and contextualization of his subject – Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato*, and Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid* – are figured around a sound and useful conception of neighbourliness: texts considered as neighbours rather than in an inferred genetic relationship. His approach to the category ‘neighbour’ is unashamedly psychoanalytic, drawing

on, for example, Freud, Lacan, Fradenburg, and Žižek. And the approach is compelling. Edmondson draws on such concepts as *jouissance*, *Nebensmensch*, the Freudian 'Thing', desire, the Other, and the Lacanian second (symbolic) death to deliver a challenging framework for his exploration into textual neighbourliness.

At times quite dense, ultimately the book is an exercise in negotiating theory. This reviewer is still struggling with the array of *jouissances* (for the first chapter alone: Cresseid's, the Narrator's, Henryson's – each *jouissance* differing in respect of their own specific categories of neighbouring) and the seeming paradox (described also as ambivalence – whose?) in *jouissance* as pleasure, as burden, and as suffering. Indeed, this complexity itself implies an ideal reader who shares the specialized 'in' psychoanalytic knowledge fundamental to the argument. But (and I am not speaking here as an expert) I wonder if Edmondson's use of psychoanalysis is not at times a trifle over wrought.

Nevertheless, this is a valuable contribution to the field and a book that well repays deep engagement, critique, and debate, for there is a level of erudition here that is not easy to put to one side, and which calls out for further discussion. But its strength is also its weakness. The density of critique can itself be a disincentive to the interested but time-poor reader, and the publisher's reliance on endnotes results in a constant and annoying shuffle to get to the depth and fullness of Edmondson's argument.

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Gerstel, Sharon E. J. and Robert S. **Nelson**, eds, *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai* (Cursor Mundi, 11), Turnhout, Brepols, 2011; hardback; pp. xxx, 608; 188 b/w, 24 colour illustrations, 5 b/w tables; R.R.P. €130.00; ISBN 9782503531274.

To label this volume 'fascinating' feels like an injustice. Centred on the 'Holy Mountain' of Sinai and St Catherine's Monastery, this is a book for anyone interested in the site of Sinai, the Monastery of St Catherine specifically, and Byzantine/Orthodox Christian monasticism generally. The essays in this collection also cover topics such as landscape in icons and landscape as icon, pre-Byzantine and Byzantine liturgy, pilgrimage and pilgrims, architecture, art, archaeology, and even European engagement with the Near East over the last millennium, from Slavic pilgrims to Venetian painting to American

photographic expeditions. It is no surprise, given that the book arose out of an exhibition of Sinai icons and manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum and an associated symposium, that it is marvellously illustrated.

Early chapters chart previous studies of St Catherine's Monastery, drawing particular attention to it as a repository of icons and architectural heritage, but also highlighting a recent move away from cataloguing and photographing icons and manuscripts as the primary activities of scholars interested in St Catherine's in the Sinai. New interests are revealed more fully in subsequent chapters. A particularly engaging theme evident in a number of contributions is the projection and development of 'Sinai' as place and style. This is not necessarily any particular local artistic or manuscript styles, although there are indications of these (see, for instance, pp. 34–72, 345–414), but rather a sense of how Sinai was represented and interpreted within and beyond the physical boundaries of monastery and mountain. This in turn situates Sinai as a useful focal point for discussions about religious, cultural, and artistic exchanges between 'East' and 'West'. Similarly, the rich archive of St Catherine's is mined (with great success) for ways of observing and interpreting changes within the Byzantine/Orthodox tradition that continues at Sinai, and for gaining a more detailed appreciation of what changes in architecture, art, and liturgy can be observed there since the beginnings of monastic habitation of the site.

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Hardwick, Paul, ed., *The Playful Middle Ages: Meanings of Play and Plays of Meaning: Essays in Memory of Elaine C. Block* (Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 23), Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; hardback; pp. xiv, 247; 95 b/w illustrations, 2 b/w tables, 1 b/w line art; R.R.P. €85.00; ISBN 9782503528809.

With *The Playful Middle Ages: Meanings of Play and Plays of Meaning*, editor Paul Hardwick has gathered together a fascinating collection of essays by international scholars, from a range of disciplines, on various aspects of 'playfulness' in the Middle Ages in Europe. The book was inspired by the late Elaine C. Block's five-volume *Corpus of Medieval Misericords* (Brepols, 2003), regarded as definitive in this field of medieval scholarship. All of the contributors are former colleagues of Block's. 'Playfulness' is broadly defined and found in a range of contexts and types of sources, covering manuscript to performance, the domestic to the doctrinal, and both verbal and visual play.

The volume consists of twelve articles, three of which are in French. The essays aim at discovering the manifestations of the playful beyond the more obvious sphere and they may be divided into three groups: firstly, those dealing with the playful within sacred spaces, which ask how this playfulness may pertain to the more overtly devotional aspects of word, art, and architecture; secondly, those addressing the playfulness of anthropomorphism, the grotesque, and even the scatological in the hope of explaining certain aspects of the transgression of cultural norms; and thirdly, those focusing on wordplay, that is, the fun and threat of slippery language.

A number of essays are worth noting and give an idea of the range of topics covered. Alan Hindley's essay examines the game motifs found in a selection of plays from the sizeable collection of late medieval secular plays, notably the *sotties* and the *moralités*. Hindley demonstrates how various motifs were applied to provide episodes of light relief while simultaneously providing a real-life focus for those tendencies that set the sinner on the road to damnation: a telling blend of both the playful and the serious.

In her contribution, Naomi Reed Kline tackles the rules of the game of courtship. The author examines scenes in which elaborate domestic-use boxes given by men to women as luxury gifts are adored. The images and inscriptions on the boxes negotiate a play of mores in which to lose oneself may paradoxically constitute winning.

In her essay, Christina Grössinger explores the depiction of the old as lecherous, greedy, and avaricious. In women, ugly features were highlighted, and in men, the ease with which young women can dupe even the wisest of men. Old age, apparently, is the greatest foe of love.

Hardwick's essay considers scatological comedy that rejoices in the faecal and other earthly, bodily functions. Sylvie Bethmont-Gallerand's contribution (in French) explores the image of a grimacing face that appears on numerous misericords in a number of European locations. The essay by Adrian P. Tudor analyses the Old French pious stories *Vie des Péres*, especially the tale known as *Queue*. Clearly, laughter came in handy when the stark messages of salvation and damnation were aimed at a lay audience outside ecclesiastic institutions.

In summary, this is a tremendous work on the medieval perception of joy. This volume is bound to offer illumination and suggestions for further explorations in the *playful* field.

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Lamb, Mary Ellen, ed., *Mary Wroth: The Countess of Montgomery's 'Urania' (Abridged)* (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 403; MRTS Texts for Teaching, 4), Tempe, AZ, Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011; paperback; pp. xii, 281; 2 illustrations; R.R.P. \$US25.00, £20.00; ISBN 9780866984515.

Mary Wroth has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past twenty-five years, from largely invisible, obscure early modern woman writer to something approaching canonical status, as demonstrated by her generous representation in the fifth edition of the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Her most ambitious work, *Urania*, published in 1621, with an unpublished continuation in manuscript, is now much studied. However, outside the group of scholars who have a particular interest in Wroth, it is hard to find people who have read *Urania* all the way through, because it is extremely long and its narrative is extremely complex. The complexity is wonderful to analyse but presents a barrier to students, and as a result *Urania* seldom makes an appearance on undergraduate courses. Mary Ellen Lamb, a noted scholar who has spent many years writing about Wroth's work, has performed an invaluable service in redacting *Urania* for those who would like to set a manageable version of this remarkable romance. Lamb has pared Wroth's formidable 600,000-odd words down to a neat 250-page paperback, with a detailed introduction, and helpful connecting explanations joining the sections she has extracted.

The end result is a valuable textbook easily able to be set for undergraduate students. Lamb notes that she has carved a kind of trail through the romance by cutting out a considerable number of subsidiary stories (as one must do in an abridgement), but at the same time she recognizes that getting lost in the maze of criss-crossing stories is a fundamental part of the experience of reading a work like *Urania*. Lamb hopes that her edition will send interested readers to the full text, which is available in two fine volumes published by The Renaissance English Text Society (Part I, 1995; Part II, 1999) and edited by Josephine Roberts, with the second volume completed by Janel Mueller and Suzanne Gossett. Lamb's modernized, repunctuated text is based on the full scholarly edition, which gives her redaction a textual authority which reinforces its usefulness as an invaluable introduction to Wroth's most ambitious and challenging work.

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McAvoy, Liz Herbert, *Medieval Anchoritisms: Gender, Space & the Solitary Life* (Gender in the Middle Ages), Woodbridge and Rochester, D. S. Brewer, 2011; hardback; pp. 211; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9781843842774.

Liz Herbert McAvoy has published extensively on medieval anchoritic traditions and this, her latest monograph, examines both male and female anchorites. Her emphasis, however, is firmly on the feminine nuances of anchorholds and reclusive religious practices. Surveying hermits, monks, holy men and women, and anchorites from sources including St John Cassian's *Conferences* up to the *Book* of Margery Kempe and the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich, McAvoy aims to show that male anchoritic practices are, overall, gendered in their expression. More particularly she argues that male anchoritisms are 'haunted' by femininity.

In particular, she reads a number of medieval commentaries on reclusive religious lives as suggesting anxiety that, while being an anchorite was a clearly holy practice, it could complicate the expression of male identity. She suggests that the language describing anchorites' experiences makes male bodies seem the objects of penetration (however that term is interpreted), in opposition to the usual action of the male body. Towards the end of the text, she turns her attention to a place that was territorially, geographically, and politically unstable, the Welsh Marches and the area around Chester. McAvoy suggests that the unstable political and cultural identity of this area is contiguous with the sense of unstable gender identity that emerges from local writings on reclusive lives.

McAvoy is clearly on her firmest ground when she is looking at the later texts, including those of Julian, Margery, and an anonymous writer from Hampshire. She has published extensively on these Middle English sources and demonstrates a particular skill in textual analysis of the writings. The chapters on the earlier medieval texts, including John Cassian, the Rule of St Benedict and Grimaic's *Regula*, are less interesting in that she is more obviously indebted to specialists from this period.

McAvoy skilfully uses a range of theoretical perspectives, notably Kristeva and Foucault. These assist in bringing meaning to the textual analysis, rather than feeling inelegantly inserted into the work, as can so often be the case with attempted integration of theory and medieval writings. Some of the language is, however, heavy handed (and the term 'concerted' is misused throughout).

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Montemaggi, Vittorio and Matthew **Treherne**, eds, *Dante's 'Commedia': Theology as Poetry* (The William and Katherine Devers Series in Dante Studies), Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2010; paperback; pp. 400; R.R.P. US\$40.00; ISBN 9780268035198.

Dante's 'Commedia': Theology as Poetry, edited by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Traherne, contains eleven essays, an Introduction, and two Afterwords. It is the result of a 2003 conference held in Cambridge at which theologians and Dante scholars discussed 'the theological implications of Dante's poetic narrative' (p. 1) and the ways in which theological considerations could illuminate the *Commedia* as a literary text.

It is a collection for a specialist audience, which would include scholars and graduate students of Dante, medieval literature, and theology. Robin Kirkpatrick's conversational opening essay 'Polemics of Praise: Theology as Text, Narrative and Rhetoric in Dante's *Commedia*', which frames the collection, seems to suggest that literary critics who find a place for first-order discourse in their engagement with texts (and the audience they write for) need not do so at the cost of critical or historical rigor, and that love must be the ethical basis of any critical tradition which has a claim on the future, as a response to the problem of what is the tenable posture of those of us who live off words.

My short review of the essays places them in four thematic groups: Images, language, philosophy, and liturgy. Peter Hawkings sees the image of the smile as an important contribution made by the *Commedia* to subsequent religious iconography, while Paula Nasti considers Dante's intertwining of strands of medieval ecclesiology centred on *caritas*, and the bride of the Song of Songs as he creates his image of the true church in Paradise. Christian Moevs explores the recurring image of 'il punto che me vinse', the point of creation, and dilation or expansion of self-knowledge and knowledge of God. In addition to the focus on language in Kirkpatrick's essay, Vittorio Montemaggi explores Dante's conception of language as our means of both engaging in and expressing what is knowable and unknowable about God, while Theresa Federici presents Dante's self-fashioning as a scribe of God in the image of King David. Oliver Davies presents a reading of the *Commedia* from the perspective of systematic theology.

Douglas Hedley explores Dante's neo-Platonism, and includes a reassessment of Romantic reception of the *Commedia*, while Piero Boitani considers Dante's notion of creation, of people and the world, and the ways in which the poetics of the *Commedia* encompass and surpass the work's classical philosophical and scriptural sources.

Matthew Treherne argues that Dante's innovation in the configuration of Purgatory and Heaven can be understood through the liturgical performance of the characters in those realms, respectively penitence and praise. Denys Turner proposes to read the poetry of the *Commedia*, in dialogue with the theological methods of Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, as sacrament, seeking to 'effect what it signifies', especially in its apophatic mode.

Dante scholarship for the non-dantista is often awe-inspiring in the way its critical discourses wrestle with the depth, breadth, and complexity of the *Commedia*. This collection is no exception.

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Okasha, Elisabeth, *Women's Names in Old English* (Studies in Early Medieval Britain), Farnham, Ashgate, 2011; hardback; pp. 150; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9781409400103.

This is a narrowly focused linguistic study. Elisabeth Okasha bases her analysis on a corpus of 289 Old English names she has identified as female. Her corpus includes only the names of individuals referred to by a female pronoun and/or designated by titles such as 'wife' or 'sister'. Most of the names in Okasha's corpus are compounds consisting of two name-elements (e.g., Æthel-thryth). Not only are there remarkably few female names in Okasha's corpus, the same name-elements tend to recur. There are only thirty-three second name-elements, and four of these are very frequently used (viz., *-burg*, *-gyth*, *-swith*, and *-thryth*). There are ninety first name-elements, but just sixteen of these are used to form five or more of the names in Okasha's corpus.

The author concludes that name-elements are not exclusively reserved for either male or female names. In other words, it appears from her study that there are no hard and fast principles for determining with absolute certainty solely from an Old English name whether the individual referred to was male or female. It is therefore possible that the gender of some individuals mentioned in Anglo-Saxon sources has been misconstrued. On the basis of the frequency with which name-elements occur, however, Okasha concludes that there were conventions, which perhaps we will never know, whereby Anglo-Saxons regarded some names as more suitable for women than men, and vice versa.

Okasha's study confirms the view that there is no consistent correlation between female grammatical gender and name-elements employed in names given to women. Nor does it seem that semantics has much bearing. Names

which have *-wulf* (wolf) as their second element are more likely to be male, but it is also common as a first element in female names. Other frequently occurring first name-elements in female names which Osaka considers semantically inappropriate for women are *Ecg-* (sword), *Here-* (army/battle), and *Sige-* (victory). Pagan Anglo-Saxons, I presume, thought otherwise.

To put that in other words, one of the ways in which we might come to an understanding of Anglo-Saxon naming practices is by discovering how they varied according to date and region. Fortunately, we can and should draw on the invaluable assistance of the online *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, which can also help to determine whether the frequency of certain name-elements merely reflects the frequency with which particular individuals are named in the historical record.

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Petersen, Nils Holger, Eyolf Østrem, and Andreas **Bücker**, eds, *Resonances: Historical Essays on Continuity and Change* (Ritus et Artes, 5), Turnhout, Brepols, 2011; hardback; pp. x, 266; 12 b/w, 4 colour illustrations; R.R.P. €80.00; ISBN 9782503534930.

The essays that comprise this volume are largely concerned with liturgical, theological, and spiritual topics. But beyond this ostensible theological focus, these studies reach out well beyond, into their social and cultural conditions, their historical contexts, their transformations, and their receptions. They are the result of a project of the Centre for the Study of the Cultural Heritage of Medieval Rituals, at the Theological Faculty at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, in particular drawing from the fourth conference of the centre, 'The Cultural Heritage of Medieval Rituals IV: Transformations of Discourse', held in the summer of 2007.

Despite the volume's subtitle implying a disciplinary limit to the scope of this collection ('historical essays'), the conference title – transformations of discourse – provides a more precise indication of the types of essays presented here. This collection casts a wide net across a range of disciplines, and is largely concerned with narrative and discourse analysis of its wide variety of material. Editor Nils Holger Petersen, in his Introduction, makes it explicit from the outset that the work of the project, and the works in this volume, are fundamentally about analysis of historical narratives within particular disciplines: history, the visual arts, musicology, archaeology, philosophy, and

theology, with the ten essays ordered around a continuity/change theme and divided into three sections: 'continuity', 'change', and 'permanence'.

The essays range across a diversity of material: the theology and ideology of martyrdom; the cultural and political contexts of images of the Virgin Mary and 'the sacred face' in the Middle Ages; discourse analysis of speeches as historiography; transformation of sixteenth-century German liturgical ritual; the expansion and modern reception of the Mona Lisa; early modern representations of Bernard of Clairvaux; and transformation and perseverance in Augustinian discourse.

The volume concludes with two somewhat different types of essays. Both consider critical interpretive issues involved in how we 'do' medieval studies, and both are worthwhile contributions to the ongoing development of the critical apparatuses in play in our work. Rob C. Wegman ('Blowing Bubbles in the Postmodern Era') muses on his journeys within and away from postmodernism, while Eyolf Østrem ('History and Humour: "Spartacus" and the Existence of the Past') considers issues of humour, representation, and medievalism in popular culture and how we negotiate meaning from the now and then, the present and the past.

In all, this is a valuable, and in places challenging, collection that delivers important observations and analyses across a variety of topic areas.

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Powell, Susan, ed., *John Mirk's Festial: Edited from British Library MS Cotton Claudius A. II, Vol. II* (Early English Text Society, Original Series, 335), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011; hardback; pp. 600; 1 b/w illustration; R.R.P. £70.00; ISBN 9780199590377.

John Mirk's *Festial* is a vernacular sermon collection, probably composed in the late 1380s to assist members of the clergy to prepare their sermons. In creating his lively collection, Mirk drew heavily on accounts of saints' lives and miracles recounted in the immensely popular *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine. Prior to the publication of Susan Powell's new edition, the only modern edition of Mirk's *Festial* was that of Theodor Erbe, Part I of which, containing the text and glossary, was published for the Early English Text Society in 1905. The second part, which was to contain an Introduction and Notes, was never completed owing to Erbe's untimely death during the First World War.

Volume I of Powell's critical edition, containing an Introduction, Sermons 1–49 and a bibliography, was published in 2009 [reviewed *Parergon*, 28.2 (2011), pp. 262–63]. Volume II completes the work, with the texts of Sermons 50–68, covering the feasts and Ember Days from the feast of St James (25 July) to the feast of St Katherine (25 November), and a sermon for the Dedication of a Church. Additional sermons for marriages and burials (plus burial notes), an *Ave Maria* sermon, a *Paternoster* sermon, and a sermon of Miracles of the Virgin are also included. The text is followed by almost two hundred pages of explanatory notes. A glossary, appendices including full collations, an additional bibliography, and a useful table of biblical references and allusions, complete the edition. Volume I provided a detailed study of the Claudius A. II manuscript and its transmission, but lacked any description of the other surviving manuscripts. This has been remedied in Volume II, with an appendix dedicated to descriptions of the other complete or once-complete manuscripts, partial manuscripts, and revisions.

This two-volume publication is a long-awaited and welcome contribution to scholarship, and should prove a useful resource for researchers in a wide range of fields for many decades to come.

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Ruggerini, Maria Elena, with Veronka Szóke, eds, *Studi anglo-norreni in onore di John S. McKinnell: 'He hafað sundorgecynd'*, Cagliari, CUEC, 2009; paperback; pp. 488; R.R.P. €24.00; ISBN 9788884675279.

This collection celebrates the scholarly contribution of John McKinnell on his retirement from Durham University. McKinnell's many research interests are represented in the essays. These are in English and Italian, testimony to John's close connections with Italy, and his influence on Old Norse studies there. The collection falls into two sections: the first covers a range of topics; the second is dedicated to Old Norse literature and culture. The first four essays are on Old English: Gabriele Cocco offers a reinterpretation of the archer depicted on the Frank's Casket; Eric Stanley examines the half-lines of Old English verse; Veronka Szóke looks at a judgement theme in the Old English *Exodus*; Maria Elena Ruggerini places the Old English *Seven Sleepers* in its continental Latin tradition. Two essays focus on Middle English literature. Corinne Saunders's discussion of women's laments in Chaucer places them in their wider tradition, and explores their emotion and rhetoric. Roberto Arduini reviews Tolkien's scholarship on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and

its influence on his creative work. The following essays are on early modern drama: Roberta Mullini looks at the student play *Thersites* in its literary context; Maria Grazia Dongu reviews a modern staging of Brome's *A Jovial Crew*. Laura Sanna's essay on the rhetoric of three of Lancelot Andrewes's sermons ends the first section.

Lorenzo Lozzi Gallo re-interprets the runic 'Ribe Stick' in the context of early Scandinavian Christianity. Anatoly Lieberman discusses the very idea of the 'rune', exploring the word's etymology. Diego Poli looks at medieval Christian historians' treatments of the foundation of Iceland, and their ideological interests. Marco Battaglia traces the motif of dragon's treasure across myth and folktale. Two essays focus on Eddic poetry: Judy Quinn traces the triangular relationships in *The Lament of Oddrún*; Rudolf Simek reads the fantastic elements of Eddic poetry in twelfth-century context. The 'fantastic' is also the theme of Fulvio Ferrari's study of Norse monsters. Giovanna Salvucci studies the literary legitimization of kingship in the royal sagas; Simonetta Battista touches on bad kingship in her reading of the names of John in *Jóns Saga Baptista*. Ásdís Egilsdóttir uncovers medieval Icelandic compositional techniques; Dora Faraci traces the artistic and literary history of the Cyclops in the Icelandic *Physiologus*. Teresa Párolí explores the construction of the Finns in Olaf Magnus's geographical history. The final essay, by Sigurður Pétursson, discusses the assimilation of two Icelandic scholars into nineteenth-century Danish learned society.

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Salter, Elisabeth and Helen **Wicker**, eds, *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300–1550* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 17), Turnhout, Brepols, 2011; hardback; pp. vi, 335; 11 b/w illustrations, 1 b/w table; R.R.P. €70.00; ISBN 9782503528830.

'Language' is conspicuously absent from the title of Elisabeth Salter and Helen Wicker's edited collection. One realizes, however, that 'vernacularity' is indicative of the welcome scope of its contents. The vernacular receives due linguistic scrutiny, but it is also treated alongside national origin myths, devotional experience, architectural description and urban identity, and political enfranchisement. Wicker's Introduction elaborates these strands and contextualizes their place within the growing field of 'vernacular studies'.

Michael Clanchy opens the volume's first section, 'Reading and Writing', with an analysis of England's ABC primers. He considers their devotional

and cultural functions and their differences from continental counterparts. Amanda Moss's essay explores the combined inflections of orthodox and heterodox thought found in a fifteenth-century devotional anthology. A 'Complaint of Christ' poem across six manuscripts is described by Salter to demonstrate evidence for vernacular practices within contexts of wider devotional reading.

Assembled as 'Religious Experiences', contributions from Sarah James, Rob Lutton, and Stewart Mottram engage with vernacular practices of theological writing in England. James highlights 'chronic instability' in Reginald Pecock's idea of the vernacular, and Lutton breaks traditional boundaries of vernacular scholarship by discussing a multi-genre range of media devoted to the Holy Name of Jesus. Mottram contextualizes Wyatt's *Penitential Psalms* within contemporary prefaces to English Bibles, showing that clarity was neither the goal nor the product in many cases of vernacular translation.

'Political Issues' begins with Wicker's account of treasonable language trials alongside developing political identities and enfranchisement. Helen Fulton gives a masterful survey of medieval Welsh literature, focusing on gentry writer-patron networks and the tensions and integrations of non-native origin myths into vernacular Welsh traditions. Our perspective of language in central English government is reoriented by Dodd's refreshing assessment of the political and linguistic nature of the records, a review that refutes the theory of a Lancastrian Chancery English standardization policy.

In the volume's final section, 'Conceptual Vocabularies', Jayne Rimmer discusses housing in York and Norwich, highlighting differences and similarities in the language of urban dwellings of the wealthy and poor, and across regional areas. Andrew Butcher's analysis of a Canterbury Cathedral administration book includes an index of its English words and posits vernacular behaviour as informing the creation and collection of its documents.

Concluding with remarks from Ian Johnson, this collection creatively emphasizes the vernacular aspects and the non-homogeneous nature of late medieval English and Welsh cultures. Its approaches and scope will provide valuable direction for further studies of vernacularity.

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Warner, Lyndan, *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France: Print, Rhetoric, and Law* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World), Farnham, Ashgate, 2011; hardback; pp. 278; 6 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £65.00; ISBN 9781409412465.

Lyndan Warner's analysis of how 'man' and 'woman' were conceptualized, constructed, and debated in the print culture of Renaissance France represents a significant contribution to early modern literary and gender scholarship. The value of this study is twofold: firstly, it places Renaissance ideas of women alongside those concerned with men, rather than considering the 'woman question' in isolation. Warner shows that, even though the virtues and vices of women and men were seen to manifest differently, both were considered through the lens of established theological, literary, and philosophical traditions that highlighted the dignity–misery and praise–blame attributes of both men and women. It is for this reason that they need to be analysed together, so that the blame accorded to women, and often observed by scholars, can be understood in this broader context. Secondly, it considers the well-ploughed field of the *Querelle des femmes* within a much wider chronological frame than usual, one that includes intellectual, literary, cultural, and – most of all – gendered contexts (Warner introduces the 'man question' alongside that of the woman). In so doing, the study underscores the various traditions that gave rise to the genre, and its evolution over time. Its legacy and usages, from its role as a key genre in the busy book trade (where the socially anxious French tried to understand the complicated business of how to find and keep a good woman, since the uncertainties of the French social hierarchy meant that a wife could lead to stability and honour, just as easily as to loss and ruin), to the law courts, where Warner provides a fascinating description of the genre's use by lawyers (reported and embellished in legal publications) to persuade judges, sometimes arguing on the side of the woman and sometimes on the side of the man.

Another illuminating feature of this study is that, against the familiar backdrop of a Renaissance literary world steeped in paradox, contradiction, and shifting truths that underpinned the period's favoured literary styles of the dialogue, debate, and the essay, a woman, just as much as a man, was open to interpretation; she was not alone in being singled out as prone to sin (for so was man), and indeed she often warranted praise and defence (as did man). Of course none of this prevented women from having a markedly inferior status compared with men in most areas of life, particularly in the public and legal spheres. Indeed, while literature about women and men might have been drawn from ideas broadly concerning the human condition, as Warner

argues, rather than with a view specifically to vilify or hollowly praise women as is commonly thought, it is significant that women remained relatively silent on the subject (including in Warner's study, with a few fascinating exceptions that might have benefitted from further analysis, such as Louise Labé).

To this end, feminist and gender historians would appear to remain correct in pointing out that, regardless of the surprisingly even-handed approach to women and men in the literary sphere outlined by Warner, it was the shortcomings of women that most often caught the eye and fell under the spotlight of the early modern men who, for the most part, retained the privilege of deciding what to write.

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Williams, Ann, *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy 900–1066*, London, Continuum, 2008; paperback; pp. 240; R.R.P. £24.99; ISBN 9781441121127.

With *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy 900–1066*, Ann Williams provides an exceptional and accessible insight into the pre-Conquest development of the English aristocracy, an area of Anglo-Saxon history rarely addressed in academic scholarship. While acknowledging the lack of reliable written sources for the study of the early medieval period, Williams has nonetheless successfully used codes, charters, and *Domesday Book* to develop an understanding of the various levels of social standing within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms prior to the Norman Invasion.

Unlike some other works on late Anglo-Saxon society, Williams does not concentrate on the most famous of earls, Godwine of Wessex. Instead, in her first chapter, she uses Earl Odda as the chief example by which to examine the characteristics, wealth, and careers of eleventh-century earls. Parts of the discussion seem under-developed, however, and it is not until the end of the chapter that Williams discloses to the reader that the rank of earl was a privilege reserved for the closest servants of the king, rather than a hereditary title.

In Chapter 2, Williams closely examines the contemporary written evidence to determine the place of *stallers* and *thegns* within Anglo-Saxon society. Like the earls, she suggests the fortunes of the *stallers* were closely related to their position in the king's service. Despite the security of holding land and wealth, displeasing the king could result in outlawry or exile, such as that experienced by Osgod clapa in 1046.

In the third chapter, Williams uses surviving local community memoranda (most of which relates to Kent) in conjunction with *Domesday Book*, to construct an understanding of the extent to which the English *thegns* acted as a coherent group. She suggests that a recognizable county community administered the shire of Kent, with close links existing between the Kentish noble families. However, since, as Williams acknowledges, this same abundance of information is not available for other parts of Anglo-Saxon England, it cannot be asserted definitively that other regions also experienced similar community links.

The direction of the discussion then moves from an explanation on the types of aristocrats to a general discussion on their shared characteristics. Chapters 4 and 5 cover the relationship between lords and their entourages, along with the possession and transfer of land. The last chapters discuss how Anglo-Saxon aristocrats displayed status. Williams ascertains that nobles were recognizable by their appearance, language, and manner. A range of other topics, such as the development of manor houses and churches, personal possessions, including weapons and cloths, and the aristocratic pursuits of hunting, falconry and feasting are also covered. Overall, the discussion is enlightening, but while Williams has managed to cover a large amount of material in relatively few pages, the last chapters are unsatisfyingly short and lacking in depth.

Moreover, close to half of the book is devoted to the notes, appendices, and bibliography. While these pages complement the main text, I would have preferred fewer of them, and more space devoted to the investigation into Anglo-Saxon lordship. Considering the number of topics and terms covered within the book, the index also seems short. The omission of some page numbers in the appendices and the first few pages of the notes is also distracting. Nevertheless, none of this should prevent the reader from enjoying what is otherwise an interesting and well-presented book, now available in paperback, on the development of lordship in late Anglo-Saxon England.

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Wright, Monica L., *Weaving Narrative: Clothing in Twelfth-Century French Romance* (Penn State Romance Studies), University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010; paperback; pp. xi, 192; R.R.P. US\$35.00; ISBN 9780271035666.

Monica Wright presents an analysis of the uses of textiles and clothing in twelfth-century courtly literature, suggesting they provide a fundamental role in the construction of the texts: they are used to develop and elaborate character; to advance or stall the plot; and to provide an overall structure. Wright pursues this task while taking into consideration the changes that were occurring within twelfth-century society as a new mercantile class, underpinned by money acquired through textile production and commerce, impressed itself upon the nobility. Cloth was pivotal to social positioning to two different classes within twelfth-century society. It provided wealth for the development of a mercantile middle class that could challenge the nobility who used clothing and fashion to demonstrate their status. Investment in luxurious cloth filled the purses of the mercantile classes, who were most likely to disrupt the social status quo through their upward mobility that was made possible by their increased wealth. The importance of cloth, both within the literature of the nobility of the period and as the means for social advancement for those who threatened the status quo, provides a fascinating lens through which to reassess the twelfth-century verse romance. Wright draws upon the work of Eugene Vinaver who had noted that the process of composing verse romances had much in common with tapestry weaving as they share the organizing principles of creating meaning through patterns.

The first chapter thus opens by presenting the patterns that are to be found in twelfth-century verse pertaining to cloth, noting the transition from *chansons de geste* in which clothing bears little meaning to more courtly literature in which cloth can be seen as a sign. The difference between a symbol that is stable and sign that varies with context is a fundamental aspect of Wright's argument. The more practical aspects of clothing (manufacture, materials, and types of garments) for the period are discussed in Chapter 2, providing key vocabulary for understanding the analysis of the texts.

The following chapters are tied more to the texts. Chapter 3 looks at the role of clothing in character elucidation while Chapter 4 proposes that ambiguity, ambivalence, or arbitrariness can be inscribed into texts through these same items. The final chapter is an analysis of the role played by clothing to structure the narrative thread of various texts, in particular *Guillaume d'Angleterre* (author unknown) and *Guigemar* by Marie de France. Through these texts, Wright demonstrates that clothing acts (dressing, undressing, gift

exchanges etc.) provide insight into character development, plot, and the thematic narrative development.

Although this book is heavily dependent on the literary analysis of texts, it contextualizes the material into the changing social role of cloth production and the development of fashion, as well as looking at the role cloth played in the changing relationship between two social classes of the twelfth century. This provides a fascinating lens through which to look at twelfth-century literary creation.

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