Marginalia Reviews

The Familiar Enemy:
Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War
Ardis Butterfield
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
ISBN: 978-0-19-957486-5 (Hardcover); 444 pages.
£60.00 ($99.00).

The phrase *familiar enemy* is Chaucer's: 'what pestilence is more myghty for to anoye a wyght than a famylier enemy?' asks Philosophy in *Boece* (book 3, pr.5, 68-70). This idea provides the philosophical matrix that shapes Butterfield's book. It considers encounters between English and French throughout the Middle Ages, encounters that were characterised and shaped both by affinity and alterity. The cover image, which comes from a late fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Chroniques de France*, encapsulates this strange antipathy that is dependent on sympathy: it shows 'a deeply ambiguous fraternal embrace. Edward III and Philippe VI, at the very moment where Edward swears fealty, are shown locked close and cheek to cheek. This gesture, visually so full of affection, proclaims the start of war' (p. xix).

As the preface states, 'the relationship between England and France, *soeurs ennemies*, has been praised, mocked, fought for, resisted, ceaselessly discussed, and self-consciously lived, for longer than any other Western axis.' (p. xix). The two coasts, so close and yet so far, have found in their friction and their friendship much that has been used to define their national identity. The complexity of their relationship is Butterfield's theme, and one which she treats with refreshing subtlety. Butterfield owes much to Derrida, whose philosophies of language and translation permeate her argument, and are perceptible although unseen in the book's alertness and willingness to see shades of grey where previous scholars of Anglo-French relations have been content with black and white national and linguistic boundaries. Derrida's famously contradictory propositions form the paradox that is the kernel of the book's argument: 'On ne parle jamais qu'une seule langue. On ne parle jamais une seule langue.' ['We only ever speak one language. We never speak only one language', (p. 98)].

I would suggest that this characteristic perceptiveness will be one of the book's lasting achievements – and perhaps one of its most controversial contributions. It collapses one of the binaries that has characterised so much of the criticism that has attempted to define the relationship between English and French in the Middle Ages. Much of this debate hitherto has been devoted to drawing battle lines between the languages – to establishing the extent of French influence at any given point, to defending its status as a living vernacular, or concomitantly to asserting, often in triumphalist tones, the resergence and dominance of English. Butterfield's position is much more subtle, and more daring. She suggests that '"English" could be defined precisely as a form of French... "English" is not therefore a single concept that works merely in polarity with French; it contains and is contained by French in a subtle, constantly

changing, and occasionally antagonistic process of accommodation' (p. 99). This statement challenges old orthodoxies so foundationally that it is likely to meet with some controversy. Yet, regardless of how far the reader agrees with Butterfield's position, her argument changes the nature of the debate. Instead of seeing English and French as discrete entities in sometimes abrasive coexistence, she reminds us of the very lack of fixed boundaries in their mutual encounter. English and French bleed into one another (not an inappropriate metaphor, perhaps, for the fourteenth century) on many fronts: the site of their encounter is not a rigid dividing line, but a blurred, confusing, linguistically double and ideologically complex blend. Butterfield repeatedly draws attention to the multiplicity of language – the fact that a binary conception of 'English' and 'French' anachronistically fails to account for the polyphonic linguistic reality, comprising not only English (and its many dialects), and Anglo-Norman, but also Parisian French, Flemish, Picard, Francien, Walloon, Breton, Champenois, Bourgignon, Lorraine, Gascon, Catalan, all of which were in differing political and cultural relations... talking of languages as *either* holistically discrete *or* internally unified does not recognise the realities of an era before standardisation. It is this acknowledgement that makes Butterfield's claim original. It reminds us that we need to consider bold statements of English identity conjured in opposition to French as springing out of a culture that was far from *living* such a binary; that we need to be alive to the possibilities of such articulations springing from a reaction to the familiar, as well as from a fear of the 'other'. As Butterfield concludes, 'languages give the lie to attempts to create national beginnings. Their entanglements are a counter-plot to national histories: they show how national histories are strange, wilful distortions made to create very specific narratives' (p. 391).

The book's first part, 'Nation and Language', aims 'to set the two histories of English and Englishness, French and Frenchness within the same overarching narrative'. It traces some of the pre-history of the Hundred Years War, beginning with Wace (and a comparison with Victor Hugo, another Jersey poet looking in both directions across the channel – an example of the some of the incidental yet illuminating cross-period resonances that Butterfield enjoys). It goes on to discuss several texts, from The Strasbourg Oaths to the fabliaux, in a discussion of 'the linguistic intricacies' of post-Conquest cross-channel relations, 'in the belief that war is not merely the cause of Anglo-French separation but the symptom of its fundamental likeness' (p. 1). The second section, entitled 'Exchanging Terms: War and Peace' deals with the fourteenth century. It discusses the poetic rivalries of Jehan de la Mote and Philippe de Vitry, and of Chaucer and Deschamps, as a paradigm for thinking about linguistic sparring that depends both on cultural friction and cultural debt. It offers a provocative reading of *The Knight's Tale,* that sees in Palamon and Arcite resonances of Jean II, royal prisoner of Edward III; and it discusses the idea of envoys in *Troilus and Criseyde.* The third part, 'Vernacular Subjects', moves into the fifteenth century. It begins with a discussion of *The Book of the Duchess,* pondering significant questions such as monolingualism and its ideology, of translation, of the plural and non-discrete nature of both English and French, the idea of the 'mother tongue', and Chaucer as the 'father' of English. It includes a section on Charles d'Orléans, the aristocratic prisoner-come-diplomat bilingual poet. It then goes on to think about the lasting imaginative impact of Agincourt and of Jeanne la

Pucelle, as opposing symbols of nation. Finally it moves into the sixteenth century to finish with Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The book is expertly put together, with a comprehensive index and bibliography, ten plates and three maps. It is a survey of attitudes to language and war with a deeply thoughtful and thought-provoking premise. The old and, dare I say, entrenched field of study on the fraught question of relationships between English and French, is much the richer for it. As *The Familiar Enemy*'s own closing words suggest, 'the locus for imagining difference is to be found somewhere on the voyage rather than at the journey's end' (p. 394).

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Chaucer from Prentice to Poet: the metaphor of Love in Dream Visions and Troilus and Criseyde
Edward I. Condren
(Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008)
ISBN-978-0813032412; 240 pages.
£53.50 ($59.95).

As the title *Chaucer from Prentice to Poet* appropriately suggests, Condren's book attempts to chart Chaucer's progress as a poet while simultaneously considering the various 'matters that challenge him as a practicing poet' (1). As expected, his analysis, strengthened by scattered diagrams and an appendix, involves 'the subjects and forms of literature, the relation between literature and life, literary construction, self-representation, and the important matter of royal favor' (62). Condren's critical approach is Janus-faced: ambitious in scope, yet does not sacrifice meticulous attention to detail. His chapters, divided by work, consider numerical design, metaliterary aspects of self-dialogue, before-and-after comparisons of a poet's maturing process, the Boethian formula of unity, and finally, overarching themes centered around 'macrocosmic love and the creation of poetry' (2). Condren's approach dares to challenge a range of critical assumptions propagated *ad arbitrium* by modern critics, which altogether contributes to a highly thought-provoking and persuasively argued chronological survey of Chaucer's career as a poet.

In his chapter on the *Book of the Duchess*, Condren attempts to derail the assumption held by modern critics that the man in black represents John of Gaunt. Rather, the man in black, he argues, represents a persona of Chaucer as a young poet. The dialogue between the dreamer and the man in black 'reconstructs the maturing of a poet' (37) and reflects a long tradition of self-dialogue, which includes the writings of Guillaume Machaut. To advance his case, he relies on historical circumstance, scribal inconsistencies, editorial opinion, and strong internal evidence. He doesn't hesitate to admit his claims are 'bold' and run 'counter to the dominant critical belief' (22). He further speculates that the poem was originally written for Queen Philippa, who died when Chaucer was on her staff at 'the age of foure and twenty yer' (line 455). The poet then later revised it to sound like the culmination of an eight-year en-

deavor to finish a poem for Gaunt's wife Blanche. This would of course explain some of the poem's inconsistencies, such as the word *fers*, a word meaning a chessboard queen.

Condren's numerical analysis, prompted by the poem's mention of Pythagoras, is equally intriguing. Using the same magnitudes employed by Virgil, the structural composition of the *Book of the Duchess* perhaps reflects the commonly known magnitudes of the divine proportion. He speculates how 'this proportion's power to expand indefinitely, associated with infinite divine power, suits perfectly an elegy for a woman whose death, to all who knew her, would bring the lady herself to the expansion of heavenly bliss' (59). In Chapter 3, Condren similarly examines plausible mathematical strategies involved in the *Parliament of Fowls*. Some modern critics are likely to regard the application of numbers as mere coincidence and as a strategy not demonstrable *ad oculos*, but at the very least these chapters will influence our understanding of Chaucer's interest in mathematics.

It is not surprising that the book on Chaucer's progress as a poet would include two chapters (4 and 5) on the poet's dream vision most infused with 'metaliterary meaning,' the *House of Fame*. Condren's purpose is to find a fabric of unity in this enigmatic piece, where the apparent lack of a main subject is a bit problematic. In short, he imagines the *House of Fame* as a complete and finished prologue to *Troilus and Criseyde*, that is to say, the missing 'love-tydynges.' Furthermore, he argues, 'it seems more than coincidence that *Troilus and Criseyde* is Chaucer's only major poem lacking its own prologue, and the *House of Fame* his only major poem lacking an obvious leave-taking' (130). Starting from his analysis of the parallel structure and compositional strategy in the dream visions, Condren arrives at interesting conclusions. First, he takes the 'English Gaufride' to be Chaucer himself, whereas the majority of critics assume the reference to be Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Welshman. Following the autobiographical thread, the narrator's wanderings in the House of Fame may very well represent Chaucer's store of literary precedents gained as a young author buried deep in his books, whereas the House of Rumor may reflect a maturing poet's observations of daily life as a more direct source of poetic inspiration (123). The man of 'gret auctorite,' he claims, is in fact the author himself standing before his audience in 'mock anonymity' and 'transparent inflation' (136). He adds, 'The *House of Fame* may be an ex post facto explanation of the circumstances that led to some heinous offense' (136). If the reader is not convinced by this theory, the analysis nonetheless sheds new light on shared thematic material between *The House of Fame*, *The Legend of Good Women*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. In particular, Condren suggests that some elements in *Fame*, such as the Dido-Aeneas episode on love and betrayal, can serve as obvious counterpoints to *Troilus and Criseyde*.

In Chapter 6, Condren examines *Troilus and Criseyde* as it relates to the poet's interests in artistic creation and cosmic unity, particularly as characters are pitted against the temporal and the eternal. The shape of the poem's action, it seems, is once again grounded in mathematics. For instance, he draws attention to the thematic implications of the word *dulcarnoun*, a reference to the two-horned shape of the geometric proof of the Pythagorean theorem. In the dialogue between Pandarus and Criseyde, Chaucer's comparison of both rational and irrational right triangles reveals 'a complex metaphor for Criseyde's

dilemma in wanting Troilus and yet wishing not to disclose that she wants him […] a perfect symbol of the incompatible choices she faces near the end of the poem where ideals compete with practicality' (143). In addition, Condren's coherent reading of the consummation scene at the heart of Book III is as refreshing as it is matter-of-fact, offering an alternative interpretation on Troilus's faint. Insights on Criseyde's subtle marks of character are equally persuasive, particularly in relation to his closing comments on the philosophical paradox in the *Consolatio*.

On the whole, Condren's investigations offer an impressive number of provocative interpretations (*sensu lato* and *sensu stricto*) that will prove a valuable resource for future students and scholars of medieval literature.

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Medieval Grammar & Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475.
Ed. by Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter.
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
ISBN-978-0-19-818341-9 (Hardcover); 972 pages.
£95.00 ($175.00).

Medieval Grammar & Rhetoric presents an historical survey of the teaching of grammar and rhetoric from antiquity through the Middle Ages; of the theories of literary language, form and structure that constituted the basis of any student's education in this period. The editors describe this weighty volume as a contribution to two closely related fields of study: the history of the language arts and the history of literary theory, but this description does not do complete justice to the wealth of information provided by the primary works translated and collected in this book and by the editors' elegant chapter introductions, pithy headnotes and textual notes. As the editors note, the arts of grammar and rhetoric formed the 'abiding toolbox for anyone engaged in a life of letters'. Those now engaged in studying the writers of this period, in whatever field, will be grateful for this challenging introduction to the tools in that box.

For the most part, this book is organised diachronically. Part 1 outlines the key grammatical and rhetorical works of late antiquity and the early medieval period. Part 3 traces the rise in the popularity of the learned commentary on these traditional works in the twelfth century and the consequent growing sophistication of the vocabulary of grammar and rhetoric and the widening gulf between the logical and literary domains of grammar that culminated in the thirteenth century. Part 4 surveys the development of new theories to meet new pedagogical needs in the late twelfth and throughout the thirteenth century, such as the new *ars poetriae* developed for compositional training in the medieval grammar schools and the arts of letter writing (*ars dictaminis*) and of preaching (*ars praecandi*). Part 5 outlines the professional, civic and scholastic approaches to the language arts in the thirteenth century: the subordination of grammar and rhetoric within more specialised areas of university study, the en-

try of Ciceronian rhetoric into the vernacular civic sphere and the impact of the appearance of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the second half of the thirteenth century. Finally, Part 6 traces the reception of the traditions of grammar and rhetoric in the later middle ages. This section, the shortest, is the least satisfying in its argument and scope, particularly in its discussion of the deployment of rhetorical theory in the English literary works, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Lydgate's *Fall of Princes.* It is perhaps unfair to expect a more detailed analysis of the relationship of literary works to rhetorical theory in a volume intended as a general survey of grammar and rhetoric. Even in the short discussions of these works, the editors prove that a greater knowledge of the traditions of rhetoric and grammar can provide a rich resource for provocative new readings of these works (if further proof were required, see Rita Copeland's early work *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1993)).

The two exceptions to the general organizing principle both address themes spanning the entire period. The 'General Introduction' presents six essays on larger thematic issues identified in the works presented: the classification of knowledge; grammar: the logic of language and the 'reading road'; figurative language in grammar and rhetoric; rhetoric, poetics, and the forms of fiction; hermeneutics and rhetoric: reading as invention; and the ethics of grammar and rhetoric. These essays, which provide an historical overview as well as a challenging theoretical analysis of each theme, epitomise the sophisticated and often challenging argument of the editors' introductory sections. The other exception is Part 2, which provides a diachronic overview of two important themes in the theory and teaching of grammar over the entire period: the struggles to theorise and translate the Latin ablative absolute construction and the use of etymology.

The above summary has not described the 57 translated excerpts from primary works around which the editors have constructed their survey. One of the delights of the book is finding within these selections far more than dry theoretical treatises expounding the Latin cases or the rhetorical tropes. For example, anyone who has struggled with the ablative absolute will recognise the rueful translation-anxiety of the writer of the General Prologue to the *Wycliffite Bible* who expounds the difficulties of translation and advocates a non-literal approach since often 'to Englisshe it after the word, wolde be derk and douteful.' More fun to read are the lively translations of the allegories of Grammar and Rhetoric from Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*; on finishing her speech Rhetoric confidently places a noisy kiss on Philology's forehead 'for she did nothing quietly, even if she wanted to.' The majority of the excerpts are, however, less obviously delightful and often difficult to tackle. The editors' headnotes are helpful guides through this material, being, in essence, modern models of the *arcessus ad auctores* tradition. They combine short descriptions of each work, its place within the tradition, its influence on later writers and notes for further reading.

The one disappointment with this book is that only English translations of the primary works are provided. The editors sometimes add a Latin term in brackets in the translation, offering a tantalising insight into the potential difficulties and controversies in rendering these technical treatises into precise and coherent English. At 972 pages in length, it is understandable that the publishers did not want to add to this already weighty volume, but was there not some

other feasible way to provide these excerpts in their original language, such as via a web-site or a DVD pocketed in the back, rather than force readers to search through the *Patrologia Latina* or find the modern edition? Despite this lack, *Medieval Grammar & Rhetoric* will be a very useful introduction and reference work for many years.

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Printing the Middle Ages.
Siân Echard
(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)
ISBN-978-0-8122-4091-7 (Hardcover); 314 pages.
£42.50 ($65.00).

Anyone who has made use of Siân Echard's eclectic webpages will have noted her interest in the visual form of medieval texts: in manuscripts, early printed books, and later editions and translations. Intended for undergraduate readers, they provide an enjoyable diversion for the procrastinating medievalist, containing images such as the fabulously multi-coloured and somewhat trippy illustrations in the Cockerel Press *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, published in 1954. In *Printing the Middle Ages*, Echard explores and theorises this theme, as she 'seeks to understand the lasting impact, on both the scholarly and popular imagination, of the physical objects which transmitted the Middle Ages to the English-speaking world.' [p. xi]

Echard approaches the topic her publishers describe as 'the postmedieval, postmanuscript lives of medieval texts' with much experience of those texts in their medieval, manuscript forms. Her eye for palaeographical and codicological detail provides a fascinating guide to printed texts; like manuscripts these too have a great deal to say about the text encoded in their material form, as she convincingly shows. Yet while Echard's field is medieval studies, her book demonstrates serious and profitable engagement with the work of book and print historians from a variety of periods, including Roger Chartier, David McKitterick, and Leah Price. This broad, cross-period critical engagement, combined with the evidence of her sustained and imaginative archival research, situates each text Echard considers fully within the intellectual life of its period, from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

As can be seen from her lengthy chronological sweep, Echard's topic is huge and can only be approached, as she has done, through assiduously-researched snapshots into particular textual traditions in certain centuries. Echard charts through all her chapters what she calls 'the mark of the medieval', which authors, illustrators, and publishers seek to use to identify the origins and authenticity of their work. She begins in her introduction by examining the print history of images found in *Piers Plowman* manuscripts; she writes that 'the plowman image', which she describes as having a mobile and symbolic role in printed versions of texts of the *Piers* tradition, 'can be seen as a crystallization of the process by which medieval texts have made their way into our hands.' [p. 17] In her first chapter, 'Form and Rude Letters', Echard's focus is on the most

fundamental way a printed edition can suggest the authenticity of its text. Exploring sixteenth and seventeenth century editions of Old English texts, the chapter examines the use of 'Gothish' letters; as she reveals in a later chapter, the use of 'Saxon' fonts to evoke the rudeness of the Anglo-Saxon past was so attractive to scholars that antiquaries were known as 'Blackletter men' into the nineteenth century. [p. 143] Chapter Two, 'The True History of Sir Guy (And What Happened to Sir Bevis?)' reveals how the visual images that accompanied seventeenth and eighteenth century editions and retellings of medieval romance tell quite a different story from the purely textual transmission. In her third chapter 'Aristocratic Antiquities' Echard demonstrates most explicitly that the interpretative past of medieval literature is deeply implicated in our current readings, as Macaulay's late-nineteenth-century edition of Gower, not yet supplanted, is compared with the eighteenth-century efforts of the Gower family to laud the poet they claimed as their ancestor. Here, as throughout, Echard's own images really prove their value, as we contrast the same text in manuscript, a hand-written transcript, and a printed edition, with both the latter seeking to replicate the former in different ways. In chapter four Echard's subject is 'Bedtime Chaucer'; the 'infantalizing', in David Matthews' term, of the father of English literature, particularly to make him suitable for women and children. It is a topic covered by several previous scholars, but Echard breaks new ground with her close attention to text and image in each production. In her final chapter, 'Froissart's Not French (Or Flemish)' she tackles a theme that runs through the history of medieval English scholarship, namely scholarly attempts to bolster the national and native roots of the literature. In her coda, Echard arrives suddenly in the present day, with a consideration of the latest – seemingly irreversible – change that the codex has seen; the birth of what she describes as the 'digital avatar'.

Printing the Middle Ages makes an important contribution to a growing debate. If we agree that there is much interest to be had in the transition from medieval to modern, this work suggests not only that constructions of the two are deeply affected by everything in between, but also that the journey itself is a highly enjoyable one. Rich and detailed, with a refreshing sense of humour, Echard's book is itself highly-illustrated, although some colour images – such as one can enjoy on her website - would have gone a long way, particularly for the manuscript and nineteenth-century images. Another minor quibble might be that while her subject conceives of textual tranmission as the material form of printed books, the work's strengths are the biographical and historical detail it brings to each example, and particularly its analysis of visual images; perhaps textual – such as issues of editing and translation - and material aspects of the book could have been more fully addressed. One would not expect Echard to delve into the history of publishing or to conduct statistical research into readerships, but her survey, focussed strongly around the author or scholar, could have stretched back to the book's production or forward to its consumption on more occasions that it does. It would be unfair to ask Echard to cover in the same space the material that her primarily-synchronic approach necessarily leaves out, especially as her chapters range back and forth chronologically more than one would expect from her periodised themes. Nonetheless it would be fascinating to read in as much detail about the later representation of Old English, or earlier versions of Chaucer. Perhaps it is fairer to hope that Echard will

continue to collect interesting imprints for a second volume, which, if anything like its predecessor, would be eagerly anticipated and warmly received.

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Paradoxes of Conscience in the High Middle Ages: Abelard, Heloise, and the Archpoet
Peter Godman, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 75
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
ISBN 978-0-521-51911-3 (Hardcover); 242 Pages.
£50.00 ($95.00).

How far is it possible to perceive ironic identities within the seeming monolith of penitential writing in the High Middle Ages? This question of sincerity and its alter ego, which Godman describes as *fictio* or the falsification of moral identity, is rarely asked: the sincerity of writers and their penitents on the subject is generally assumed, an understandable reaction when faced with the serious tone of many of the medieval tomes that deal with the topic. Yet it is a question that needs to be asked more often, as it has serious implications or our understanding of the High Middle Ages in general and the twelfth century in particular. It is possible to be too quick in assuming that a straightforwardly ethical reading of a text that engages with the spiritual life is *the* historically accurate one, without considering that a minority (but a key minority) of readers and listeners might have found in that very moral focus a source of ironic self-identitification. This awareness in turn helps us to better understand the full spectrum of twelfth century writing: a period that encompassed both the serious intensity of a Bernard of Clairvaux and the clever irreverence of an Archpoet is of necessity multifaceted and various, rather than being a simple 'Renaissance'. The teasing apart of this kind of polarization is the driving force behind Godman's work, and in characteristic fashion he chooses as his major case study for its illustration those high-profile exemplars of tragic romance so beloved of later poets, Abelard and Heloise, along with the Archpoet, a figure who has been subjected to over-simplified readings that reduce his colourful writing to the monochrome of the 'penitential'.

The first two chapters, 'Moral moments' and 'The neurotic and the penitent', trace *fictio* and its subtleties through the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, 'master-dialectician of the conscience', Augustine's struggles in the *Confesssions*, Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, and that 'dull if diligent compiler, Isidore of Seville'. The third chapter, 'True, false and feigned penance', focuses mainly on the last of these categories, discussing the problem of 'feigned' sincerity in confession and concluding that it was a vital concern more broadly because it subverted the 'sincerity and authenticity' that were 'central to the twelfth century's understanding of itself.'

The remaining chapters, dealing with the letters of Abelard and Heloise and the Archpoet's 'Confession' poem, are the ones most likely to be of interest to literary scholars. Here Godman seeks to escape the literalism of pre-

vious interpretations; he shows that Abelard's letters are an attempt to 'refashion moral identity' that expose his past spiritual sophistry, a 'drama of interiority' that has been previously accepted at face value. Heloise receives the same treatment; insisting on the difference between appearances and reality, she becomes 'lost in the labyrinth of her interiority' and the problems of her own sincerity. This subtle and sophisticated analysis of medieval literature's most famous couple moves away from the tired, biographically focused debates over authenticity, and places them in a new context that enables them to be seen as participants in the development of ideas. This liberation is also sought for the Archpoet; again seeking to distance his work from futile biographical musings, Godman interprets his famous 'Confession' as a deliberate inversion of the form of sincere penance, addressed to his complicit patron, Rainald of Dassel, a man who likewise inverted the sacred and the profane with his support for the Holy Roman Emperor against the Church during the papal schism of 1159-77. This chapter, in its close reading of a poetic text combined with pertinent and intriguing historical connections to Rainald of Dassel and intellectual debates of the time, should be a model for literary scholars who wish to historicise texts with subtlety. It also sets a new standard for literary analyses of so-called 'Goliardic' poetry, demonstrating that the Archpoet's 'Confession' has little in common with the drinking songs so often cited as examples of this type of composition, and thereby providing a welcome fresh critique of an outdated generic characterization. The book concludes with a brief discussion of *fictio* as it developed after the twelfth century, not confined to the later Middle Ages but relating it also to the problem of Albert Speer's conscience and the Nuremberg trials in the twentieth century. This is an ambitious and timely book, or rather, two books: it seeks to encompass both a history of *fictio* and lengthy twelfth-century case studies, and, whilst they are skilfully intertwined, the reader may well be left somewhat frustrated, wanting more of both than can be fitted into a monograph-length publication. Godman's 2000 book *The Silent Masters: Latin Literature and its Censors in the High Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press), contains 348 pages of text, with a similar balance between intellectual history and literary analysis, and this format suits his detailed approach better. Despite this, the book is an important and valuable contribution to the history of penitential writing and to the understanding of the three main authors with which it engages.

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Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance
Corinne Saunders, Studies in Medieval Romance 13
(Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010)
ISBN-13: 978-1-84384-2217 ISBN-10: 1843842211; 312 pages.
£50.00 ($95.00).

Rightly or wrongly, no mode of medieval writing is as closely associated with magic and the supernatural as romance. As such, it is perhaps surprising that Corinne Saunders' most recent book is the first full-length exploration of the role of magic and the supernatural in English romance. Academic study of medieval ideas of the supernatural has undergone something of a renaissance in recent years. The last decade has seen the publication of a cluster of important works on the topic, including Robert Bartlett's *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (2008) and C. S. Watkins' *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (2008). Romance also is very much 'of the moment', with a striking number of articles and books on the subject making it into print. It would seem then that the publication of *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* could not be timelier.

Like much recent work on romance and the supernatural, this book benefits from its readiness to take both seriously. As Saunders states at the outset, 'there is . . . a strong case for a more realist approach to magic and the supernatural' and she insists that romance 'participates in the dialogue and debate, both popular and learned' concerning these topics (p. 4). The remainder of the book makes the case for this more 'realist approach' convincingly. Saunders style of argument honours the 'mixed mode' (p. 3) with which she is dealing: her close readings are sensitive to nuance and stress the originality of individual authors. Although, as the title suggests, the book's primary focus is romance, Saunders' range of literary and cultural allusion is very wide. In an academic environment that tends to favour the particular over the general, it is refreshing to encounter a book as broad in scope as this one. *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* is also accessible and well-written, facts that should extent its readership beyond academics and postgraduates to advanced undergraduate students.

The book falls into two sections. The first paints a careful picture of the sophisticated network of ideas relating to the supernatural within which literary treatments of the topic should be read. The second part is concerned with a more focussed probing of specific romance texts and the uses to which their authors put these ideas. Saunders' opening chapters establish the roots of medieval ideas of magic and the supernatural in Classical and Biblical writing and trace the various strands of magical practice and belief – licit and illicit, learned and folk – that characterise medieval attitudes. The detailed treatment of Biblical and Apocryphal attitudes in Chapter 1 is particularly useful, as is the concise account of Augustine's thought in the following chapter. The third and fourth chapters give clear-sighted accounts of white and black magic respectively. A fifth chapter treats notions of the otherworld and a sixth analyses the boundaries between Christian marvels and diabolical agency. The chapter on 'Otherworld Enchantments and Faery Realms' is particularly engrossing and provides one of the best general analyses I have seen of the roles these regions

play in romance. After a final chapter on Malory there is a tantalisingly brief coda devoted to the continuities and dissonances between Medieval and Renaissance notions of the magical.

For the most part, Saunders orders her chapters and sections thematically rather than by individual texts or authors. This thematic ordering throws up some intriguing points of congruence between texts that are all too rarely considered side-by-side. Themes treated by Saunders include the use of magic in healing and love, shape-shifting, the virtues of precious stones, the figure of the witch, and revenants. On rare occasions Saunders devotes an entire chapter or a section of a chapter to an individual text or author. The discussion of Chaucer that concludes Chapter 3 takes issue with critical assumptions that the poet was 'uninterested in, or distrustful of magic' (p. 145) and goes on to demonstrate how his works, principally the *Franklin's Tale* and the *Squire's Tale*, 'engage in a conspicuously learned, realist manner with the concept of natural magic' (p. 146). The singling out of Malory for special treatment in the final chapter is judicious and produces a sensitive reading of the *Morte*.

A mode of writing as deeply concerned with the possibility of transformation as romance found a natural bedfellow in the world-altering power of magic and the supernatural. *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* is a generous and stimulating book that serves up much food for thought and will be of lasting value to scholars of medieval literature and the history of ideas.

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