EARLY MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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1. General

Dominique Boutet, *Histoire de la littérature française du Moyen Age* (Unichamp Essentiel, 12), Champion, 2003, 208 pp., follows in the footsteps of B.’s introductory *Que sais-je?* volume and is aimed at both students and the general reader. The first part examines literature and society, placing medieval texts within their intellectual and social contexts; the second part is a chronological survey of works and genres; the third, a ‘petit atlas littéraire du siècle’, is divided into four glossaries and a bibliography. This short volume, drawn up along traditional lines, provides user-friendly reference for students approaching medieval literature for the first time.

Haidu, *Subject*, is a wide-ranging work examining an assortment of canonical texts and authors (the Strasbourg oaths, *Saint Alexis, La Chanson de Roland, Le Couronnement Louis*, Marie de France, *Raoul de Cambrai, Le Roman de la rose, Le Roman de Silence*, Adam de la Halle, Philippe de Beaumanoir, Christine de Pizan, Alain Chartier, and François Villon amongst others) and the way in which they construct the subject. H. concludes that the modern political subject existed in the middle ages but modernity tends to define itself against the medieval, suppressing reference to conflict in the medieval world.

Urusla Bähler, *Gaston Paris et la philologie romane*, Geneva, Droz, 873 pp., presents an exhaustive and well-documented study of the life and work of the 19th-c. pioneer of romance philology and founder of the journal *Romania*. It includes a reprint of Bédier and Roques’s 1904 *Bibliographie des travaux de Gaston Paris* and other significant pieces. B. has made a conscious decision to omit from her study P.’s activities as an editor of texts and his interest in folklore, concentrating instead on four areas which she feels illuminate a study of P.’s career: his biography (his career path but also his political and religious beliefs and his psychology); the discourses surrounding the discipline of romance philology, concentrating particularly on the difference between French and German approaches to the question; the growing political tensions between France and Germany in the period and the effect that this had
on the way in which P. and his contemporaries saw their discipline; and
P.’s work on *chansons de geste* and on romance. B. concludes that P. is
still relevant for medievalists today less for the outcome of his research
than for his scientific methodology.

The first of four chapters of Johnson, *Friendship*, examines texts from
the period between the 11th and 13th cs, focusing on *Ami et Amile, Yvain,*
and the *Lancelot en prose*. J. applies E. Sedgwick’s analysis of homosocial
desire to this period, where different paradigms of afectivity prevailed.
In each instance examined the relationship between men (Ami and
Amile, Yvain and Gauvain, Lancelot and Galehaut) cannot be integrated
into society and results in death or the violent end of the relationship.
It is an ambitious survey of both literature and existing criticism which
could sometimes benefit from more contextual material.

Chapters 58–64 of McCarthy, *Love*, present English translations
of OF material, from Marie de France, Étienne de Fougères’s *Livre de
Manières*, and Rabelais. All the excerpts are from previously published
translations and some are quite extensive (Marie de France’s *Yonec*
appears in its entirety). Between them they cover a wide range of sexual
practices and attitudes to sexuality. M. Rolland-Perrin, ‘Les tondues et
les trainées ou les mauvais traitements infligés à la chevelure feminine’,
*Senefiance*, 50:339–56, examines the motifs of women shorn of their
hair and women pulled by their hair in a number of texts (including
the *Lancelot en prose*, Rigomer, *Les Tresces*, and the *Roman de Renart*).
Isolating these two motifs allows the modern reader to identify the
authors’ uses of an established topos and to deduce the reaction of the
medieval audience. M. Gally, ‘La raison d’amour sous l’ombre portée du
viol’, *Bély, Entre l’ange et la bête*, 187–95, examines Chrétien de Troyes’s
treatment of love, particularly in his reworking of Ovid, *Philomena,* and
in his lyric poetry, together with *Le Roman de la rose* and Richard de
Fournival’s *Commens d’amour*. G. argues that there is a tension between
amorous rhetoric and lack of self control which can be expressed in rape.
M. Griffin, ‘Writing out the sin: Arthur, Charlemagne and the spectre
of incest’, *Neophilologus*, 88:499–519, builds on Derrida’s theories on
the presence of the spectre to examine the treatment of incest in works
including the *Lancelot en prose*, *La Mort le roi Artu*, and *La Vie de Saint
Gilles*. The very refusal of authors to discuss this topic draws attention
to allegations.

F. Curta, ‘Colour perception, dyestuffs, and colour terms in twelfth-
century French literature’, *MAe*, 73:43–65, examines colour perception
in *La Chanson de Roland*, the works of Chrétien de Troyes, and in Marie
de France in the light of contemporary theories of colour perception,