
Paul Maurice Clogan, ed. *Medievalia et Humanistica. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*. New Series #30: *Humanist Educational Theory, Gregory the Great, and Culinary Comedy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004. 165p.

ALBRECHT CLASSEN
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

This journal has been in existence since 1943 and was, according to the jacket, “the first scholarly publication in America to devote itself entirely to medieval and Renaissance studies.” The present volume contains seven articles, two review articles, and twelve book reviews. The thematic orientation ranges from the early Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and the authors focus on English, Italian, Latin, French, and Hungarian material. There is no apparent chronological or thematic order of the articles despite the volume’s subtitle; instead, Jane Griffiths begins with an analysis of Skelton’s bizarre and difficult to interpret poem “Speke Parot” from 1521, followed by Sarah Gordon’s investigation of culinary comedy in French Arthurian romance, then by studies on Hungarian law, pilgrimage accounts, and equipment for monastic foundations. Most articles have about the same length, but their scholarly apparatus differs in format, though the Chicago style dominates. *Mediaevalia et Humanistica* has obviously achieved an international reputation judging on the basis of the nationality of the various authors. As a slight oddity, contrary to normal standards, even two fairly short articles by John R.C. Martyn, University of Melbourne, are included. Jane Griffiths holds a chair at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford; Fabian Alfie teaches at the University of Arizona (not Arizona State University, as indicated in the Table of Contents); Sarah Gordon is employed at the Utah State University, Joseph Grossi Jr. teaches at Canisius College, and Z.J. Kosztolnyik at Texas A&M University. The editor offers brief summaries of the individual contributions, giving special accolades to Joseph Grossi Jr.’s research, but the other articles are no less worthy of praise for their scholarship. The range of themes and issues covered by the books reviewed here is wide and offers a nice variety for many medievalists. I myself find it deplorable, however, that many language areas in Medieval Studies are not represented in this volume, such as German, Scandinavian, Spanish, Slavic, and Celtic.

Jane Griffiths argues that there is considerably more meaning to John Skelton’s fragmentary and allusive poem “Speke Parrot” from 1521 than previous scholarship could perceive. In particular, as she emphasizes, Skelton rallied against some of the contemporary Latin grammarians, especially William Horman and William Lily of St. Paul’s School, but supported Robert Whittinton, challenging them to perceive a text as a medium of teaching through refusing to reveal the full truth.

Sarah Gordon demonstrates the relevance of food preparation and eating in French courtly romances, which often contain comic elements because the hungry heroes prove to be victims of their stomachs and then tend to transgress courtly norms. She discusses these phenomena in such works as Chrétien's *Perceval*, the thirteenth-century *Perceval Continuations*, the *Roman de Fergus*, and the *Roman d'Hunbaut*. Particularly the latter two works heavily rely on culinary comedy, but Gordon does not reach a solid conclusion about why these thematic reorientations occur in these somewhat misleadingly identified "epigonous" romances. Does this culinary humor really represent nothing but a satirical dialogue with the past (29)?

Fabian Alfie unearths the remarkable topos of blaspheming God in fourteenth-century North-Italian poetry (Folgore da San Gimignano, Pietro dei Faitinelli, Cino da Pistoia, Guercio da Montesanto, Nicolò deä Rossi, one anonymous poet) as a strategy by these representatives of the Guelph party to come to terms with the ideological conflict within their own position resulting from the moral decline of the Church. One might object, however, whether such blunt criticism of God would indeed be the only purpose of this poetic blasphemy.

Joseph Grossi Jr. analyzes John Capgrave's fifteenth-century *Y Solace of Pilgrimes*, an account of his pilgrimage to Rome, which reflects harsh criticism of the decay and paganism dominating this eternal city, which could also be read as a subtle rejection of the intellectual foundations upon which Renaissance philosophy and philology were being built. Z.J. Kosztonyik illustrates the influence of Ivo of Chartres' *Decretum*, if not also of Burchard of Worms' legal writings on the legislation developed by Coloman the Learned of Hungary (1095-1116) who successfully revised the laws of St. Stephen I of Hungary. John R.C. Martyn demonstrates that Gregory the Great was deeply influenced by the musical instrument of the organ and used it as an important metaphor in his writing. In a subsequent article, he discusses what equipment was needed for the establishment of new monasteries in the Middle Ages.

The two review articles describe two new books on Piero della Francesca (Donal Cooper) by James R. Banker and Jeryldene M. Wood, and a new comprehensive study of medieval fable literature (Wendy Pfeffer) by Alexandre Huber. ✱