Reviews

Although the title of Ann R. Meyer's book suggests a primary interest in medieval allegory, the author is not interested in examining the use of allegory—or the multivalence it can allow—more broadly in the literature of the period (as, for instance, in the tradition of Rosemond Tuve). This publication is instead an exploration of the ways in which the New Jerusalem was represented in medieval literature, art, and culture, and concomitantly the way in which images and allegories can be used to direct their audience toward God. The pinnacle of Meyer's study is an examination of the fourteenth-century English poem *Pearl* and the role of the New Jerusalem in that literary work. The volume as a whole provides a chronological survey of the origins and representation of the New Jerusalem in Plotinus, Augustine, the Gothic choir and liturgy of Saint-Denis, the fourteenth-century English chantry movement and, finally, *Pearl*.

The volume is divided into three parts, each containing two chapters. The first division contains a chapter on Plotinus's 'Screen of Beauty,' delineating Plotinus' philosophy by which images of earthly objects can allow the viewer to approach the divine. This chapter is followed by one on Augustine's *City of God*, in which Meyer shows how Augustine brought aspects of Plotinus's thinking into a Christian framework.

The second division focuses on architecture and liturgy as used to express the New Jerusalem. One chapter addresses the relationship between Gothic architecture, particularly that of Saint-Denis in Paris, and eschatological thinking. This includes an analysis of the dedication liturgy used at Saint-Denis, which allows the author to address visual allusions to the New Jerusalem and the approach to divinity by means of material objects. The next chapter describes the chantry movement in fourteenth-century England and the chantry chapels themselves, which in some ways may represent the New Jerusalem.

Having by this route brought us to fourteenth-century England, the book's final division addresses *Pearl* and other poems which have been ascribed to the same author. Meyer argues that the *Pearl*-poet's ornament should be understood as parallel to Plotinus's screen of beauty, which allows the soul to move toward God. The poet's use of architecture as metaphor for the sacred should be seen specifically within the tradition of the chantry movement in fourteenth-century England. Meyer presents

the poet as 'a literary architect whose aim was to create, in poetry, a late fourteenth-century expression of the Church as a figure of the New Jerusalem' (157).

Moments in this final division are the most impressive in the book, including a brief description of the poem as an elegiac shrine to the lost maiden (180), which makes tangible the importance of architecture and ornament within the literary work. The most original contributions are to be found in this final division. The first two-thirds of the book, while providing a useful review of scholarship, do not add substantially to a new understanding of early Christian writing or Gothic architecture. However, the willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries exhibited in the various divisions takes courage for which the author should be commended.

In conclusion, this work does not attempt a comprehensive explanation of the role, throughout all medieval times and places, of the New Jerusalem or medieval allegory. Rather, the author's contribution is to enable us to better understand the role of both of these within *Pearl*. This reviewer wonders what might have arisen if Meyer had chosen to take, rather than a necessarily teleological view of the use of the New Jerusalem in *Pearl*, a viewpoint which instead allowed the recognition of the shifting use of that concept through time and varying circumstances. How might its significance in Augustine's *City of God* have differed from that represented in the architecture of Saint-Denis, and how might both of these have been different from the highly personal presentation in *Pearl*? Yet Meyer's work remains a well-researched and useful contribution to the study of medieval literary culture. The volume could also be incorporated into a graduate seminar to suggest the cross-disciplinary nature of concepts of eschatology and their prevalence in the medieval world.

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